

ExploreTM

Life and land from the heart of the Yellowstone Region

FREE

Big Sky

Jan. 17 - 30, 2020
Volume 11 // Issue #2

Chief Farhat's final call

*Resort tax approves
1% increment*

**TIGER grant
public discussion**

*Wolf reintroduction:
25 years later*

**Bozeman Stingers
coming to Big Sky**



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ON THE COVER:

Start 'em young. Colt Berglund, 14-months old, takes a break from his magic carpet laps next to the Madison Base to snack on a potato chip. Skiing can be exhausting, so don't hesitate to stop for a snack while out on the slopes and always remember to enjoy the scenery. PHOTO BY ASHLEY BERGLUND

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LOCAL.....	4	SPORTS.....	33
REGIONAL NEWS BRIEFS.....	8	BUSINESS.....	39
OPINION.....	10	HEALTH.....	45
OBITUARIES.....	11	FUN.....	47
OP NEWS.....	12	ARTS&ENTERTAINMENT.....	49
ENVIRONMENT&OUTDOORS.....	17	DINING.....	62

7

Chief Farhat's final call

Big Sky Fire Department Chief William Farhat, a veritable community hero, is stepping down after eight years of service to the Big Sky community. Farhat will be replaced in the interim by Deputy Chief Greg Megaard.

5

Resort tax approves 1% increment

At their Jan. 11 open board meeting, the Big Sky Resort Area District tax board approved two applications from the Big Sky Water and Sewer district that call for \$35 million in resort tax funding, paid for through a tentative 1 percent resort tax hike.

6

TIGER grant public discussion

On Jan. 9 the Big Sky Chamber of Commerce held a public discussion regarding concerns and the plan of action for critical upgrades slated to occur along Lone Mountain Trail and Little Coyote Road beginning next summer, paid for by money awarded to the county in 2018 by a federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant.

17

Wolf reintroduction: 25 years later

It's been a quarter of a century since wolves were controversially reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park. EBS Environmental Columnist Todd Wilkinson provides insight into the status of the watershed event, including population statistics for not only wolves, but also the species they prey on.

35

Bozeman Stingers coming to Big Sky

The Bozeman Stingers, a member of the Black Diamond Hockey League comprised of several ex-professional athletes, are hosting an outdoor hockey game at the Town Center Rink in Big Sky on Jan. 25 where they will take on the Sun Valley Suns. The Stingers hope to make the outdoor showcase an recurring annual event.



Shrouded in snowfall, skiers and boarders chat to pass the time riding Big Sky Resort's Swift Current lift before getting a chance to hunt untouched tracks. PHOTO BY JONATHAN STONE

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EDITORIAL POLICY

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Westward Social offers new dining option to Mountain Village

BIG SKY RESORT

BIG SKY— On the heels of the opening of six new dining choices in Vista Hall, there is yet another new drink and dining option for Big Sky guests. Westward Social, a new bar and restaurant, completes the first phase of an ambitious re-imagining of the core village facility, The Exchange.

“Expanding and enhancing our restaurant, lodging and après ski amenities in the Mountain Village is a core tenet of the Big Sky 2025 Vision,” said Troy Nedved, general manager of Big Sky Resort. “We also know our guests are looking for fun and memorable experiences, and that’s exactly what they’ll find at Westward Social.”

The new barbecue restaurant and bar, located on the ground floor of The Exchange, will be open for lunch, après and dinner. The restaurant features long tables and cozy booths where friends and family can pass shareable plates, explore craft cocktails, enjoy DJs and music, and—if they would like— participate in a changing menu of novel Bar Olympic Games and activities.

“We encourage tables to challenge each other in a friendly contest of Ro-Sham-Bo, Ring-Hook or Stein Hoisting,” said Adam Stevens, vice president of food and beverage at Big Sky Resort. Stevens also noted that the restaurant will host the Montana Stein Hoisting Championships in March.

In addition to indoor play, the large, heated Westward Social outdoor patio will offer an après destination on sunny days, as well as home to hilarious and messier games such as Gelande Quaffing—another championship event.

“Teams slide glasses of beer across ten foot tables which they have to catch and drink without spilling,” explains Stevens. “With Gelande Quaffing, it is sort of hard to tell who has more fun—the contestants or the crowds.”

Westward Social is a Montana farm-to-table restaurant open daily from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Reservations are available online, and walk-ins welcome.

Snobar to bring two nights of entertainment to resortgoers

EBS STAFF

BIG SKY – To the delight of music fans, Big Sky Resort is bringing back a lineup of DJs and musicians for two weekends of Snobar—evenings of EDM music on Jan. 18 and 25, each complete with four acts.

Après will begin at 3 p.m. on the Vista Deck, with music beginning at 6 p.m. on the mountain next to the Swifty 2.0 Terrain Park. A bar made out of snow will offer myriad drinks options for partygoers and revelers.

An after-party will appease night owls, spanning from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. at Montana Jack.

Visit bigskyresort.com for more information.

Missing Big Sky man located in good health

EBS STAFF

BIG SKY – A 34-year old Big Sky resident was located alive on Jan. 3 south of Big Sky after disappearing the morning of Jan 1. Rescue efforts were carried out by the Gallatin County Sheriff’s Office, Big Sky Search and Rescue, Rocky Mountain Rotors, Civil Air Patrol, the Gallatin Valley Heli and Ham crews, as well as numerous area volunteers.

Chris Kamman, was located near Buck Ridge after going missing for almost two days when he went out snowmobiling alone on his 1999 snowmobile.

Andy Dreisbach, a member of Big Sky Search and Rescue who served as the incident coordinator for this rescue effort, recognized the recovery for what it was: a team success.

“It was a successful mission,” said Dreisbach, an 11-year member of Big Sky SAR. “You know they don’t all turn out this way so when they do they should be celebrated. This was a very fortunate outcome and we should feel blessed and rejoice in that,” he added.

BSSAR is always looking for volunteers, according to Dreisbach. Those interested can apply online through the BSSAR website and contact BSSAR with any additional questions.

“What made this hugely successful was the local knowledge and the talent of the Hasty riders that went out there,” Dreisbach said. “The participation by the community as a whole, I can’t speak enough to it.”

Yellowstone goldmine film ‘Paradise’ screening at WMPAC

EBS STAFF

BIG SKY – The National Parks Conservation Association is sponsoring the showing of an Erik Peterson Photography film, entitled “Paradise,” at the Warren Miller Performing Arts Center on Jan. 21 at 6 p.m.

The film showcases the ongoing battle to shut down two proposed goldmines that would be located just outside the northern reaches of Yellowstone National Park. Peterson, as well as conservation supporters who have a role in the film, will be in attendance. NPCA, the Yellowstone Gateway Business Coalition and Businesses for Montana’s Outdoors encourage all to attend. There will be a raffle giveaway as well as beer, wine and hors d’oeuvres.

Peterson hails from Clyde Park, Montana and his film was previously featured at the Banff Centre Mountain Film Festival.

Visit paradise-film-bigsky.eventbrite.com to reserve your seat.

Resort tax board approves 1% water, sewer application

Launches novel chapter for Big Sky Resort Area Tax District

BY MICHAEL SOMERBY

BIG SKY – On Jan. 7, the Big Sky Resort Area District open board meeting had an air of significance, as community business members and organization representatives took their seats in The Wilson Hotel's Sapphire conference room.

For the most part, save ordinance tweaks and evolving compliance measures, the resort tax—the 3 percent collection levied on luxuries and goods and services in Big Sky since 1992 when the general electorate of Big Sky voted to introduce the tax to meet the growing influx and financial subsequent strains of tourists—has remained consistent, relatively unchanging.

It's only fitting that a mere week after ushering in a new decade, nearly 30 years following that critical financing decision, the BSRAD board usher in a new chapter of resort tax, one in which an additional 1 percent tax be levied in conjunction and for the express purpose of backing voter-approved infrastructural projects.

The impetus behind the approval is the direct result of years of BSRAD conversation and presence in Helena, beginning in 2017 and coming to a close in May 2019 with the passing of Senate Bill 241, which allowed for the incremental percentage in the state's 10 resort tax communities.

SB 241 laid the foundation for several organizations in Big Sky to approach the BSRAD with the community's first-ever applications for such projects, most notably the Big Sky Water and Sewer District's request for funding for two separate projects.

The first would address future shortcomings of the existing Water Resource Recovery Facility, upping average day-rated treatment capacity from 600,000 gallons to 910,000 gallons.

The project is also conditioned by the BSWSD's commitment to facilitate 500 additional Single Family Equivalents in a bid to address ongoing workforce housing shortages plaguing roadways and business owners across Big Sky.

The second application highlights the community's growth in a nutshell: construct a Lift Station near the intersection of Highway 191 and Lone Mountain Trail in order to convey wastewater from the canyon to the existing facility adjacent to Big Sky Community Park, a tonic to growing water sewer needs in Gallatin Canyon as the community increasingly turns toward the area for community facilities and housing.

Bundled into the second application is also a proposed second main to dispose of treated effluent in ground water infiltration galleries. Ultimately, the combination seeks to “improve water quality, address capacity issues due to population growth and minimize environmental impacts, most notably on the Gallatin River,” according to a BSRAD press release.

The combined requests reach a total of \$35 million, \$27 and \$12 million, respectively—60 percent of both projects' total needs, but no trivial sum.

This percentage was agreed upon by the joint committee because approximately 60 percent of the resort tax revenue is generated within the boundaries of the BSWSD, and approximately 60 percent of the registered voters of the BSRAD reside within the boundaries of the BSWSD.

Yet, considering collections grew by 16.2 percent over last three years, 13.6 percent over the last five years and 13 percent over the last 10 years—at 5 percent projected growth, the \$35 million sum will be reached in around 11 years, according to BSRAD District Manager Daniel Bierschwale.

“We are very happy with the outcome [application approval],” said BSWSD General Manager Ron Edwards.

“It's really important to show the resort tax working with the Big Sky Water and Sewer [District] on these communitywide needs,” said Kevin Germain, BSRAD chairperson.

“These are huge win-wins I see across the community,” he added. “If you didn't see the resort tax helping to pay for this, it would 100 percent be paid for by the ratepayers ... This is just another example of trying to take the burden off our property tax payers and our locals and shifting that burden to the tourists on all these projects.”

“This is just another example of trying to take the burden off our property tax payers and our locals and shifting that burden to the tourists on all these projects.”

Another notable achievement of the BSRAD from the past calendar year, commissioning consulting firm Logan Simpson to survey the community, which resulted in the “Our Big Sky: Vision and Strategy Plan,” actually listed “Improve and Maintain Infrastructure, Protect Wildlife Habitat and Natural Resources, Promote the Development of Affordable Housing” as high-ranking community priorities.

“I looked back to ‘Our Big Sky,’ where our community provided their priorities, and the combination of these two projects hit at least five of the top 18 priorities,” said Ciara Wolfe, the board's newest member and CEO of the Big Sky Community Organization.

While the BSRAD has approved the applications, the proposed increase must first pass a community ballot in May.

Deliberation over tentative proxy voting also took up a notable portion of the open board meeting. Ultimately, members of the board decided to revisit the discussion at a later date.

The next open board meeting is scheduled for Feb. 14.

Chamber hosts TIGER grant public discussion

Invites community to learn more about upcoming impacts

BY MICHAEL SOMERBY

BIG SKY – It’s been nearly two years since U.S. Sen. Steve Daines announced that a \$10.3 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant was awarded to Gallatin County to be used for ambitious improvements along Lone Mountain Trail, also known as Highway 64, and to fund the expansion of the Big Sky Transportation District’s public transit services.

The March 6, 2018, announcement arrived amid growing calls for such upgrades in response to rapidly escalating traffic woes in Big Sky.

The statistics are staggering.

According to a 2017 Big Sky Transportation Study Report prepared for the Big Sky Chamber of Commerce by Bozeman-based civil engineering company Sanderson Stewart, traffic volumes on Lone Mountain Trail increased by an average of 9.2 percent annually between 2011 and 2016, with average annual daily traffic (AADT) figures surpassing pre-recession peak traffic volumes for the first time in 2015.

In 2016, the average number of vehicles on the road came in at 7,500, and that number could reach a whopping 18,000 vehicles per day if AADT volume increases at the projected year-over-year rate of 4.34 percent over the next 18 years, according to the same study.

That study, just three years later, is arguably dated, with Joey Staszczuk, a project engineer for Sanderson Stewart, telling EBS back in September of last year that recent analysis has a more accurate AADT closer to 10 percent.

Traffic, taken on its own, was just one side of the TIGER grant coin—those infrastructural upgrades also greenlit the forward progress of the Powder Light employee housing development, assuaging the tangentially mounting issue of shrinking opportunity for the Big Sky workforce to live in Big Sky.

Those TIGER grant funds were frozen for over 15 months as they awaited signoff from the county on June 11, 2019. As Sanderson Stewart reviews bids from contractors to handle the expansive upgrades—set to take approximately two years to complete—the Big Sky Chamber of Commerce hosted a TIGER Grant Community Involvement Public Discussion at the Big Sky Medical Center Community Room on Jan. 9.

The meeting was an opportunity for members of the community to meet with the Gallatin County Grants Coordinator, Jamie Grabinski, and the engineering team from Sanderson Stewart, with an emphasis on asking preliminary questions geared toward understanding the tentative impacts on day-to-day living in Big Sky.

“Essentially [the meeting] was really about flushing out the details, determining where the rubber hits the road. That ‘x’ means ‘y’ and ‘z,’” said Candace Carr Strauss, CEO of the Big Sky Chamber of Commerce. “The purpose was to provide more in-depth detail to a previously topline story, adding new levels of granularity.”

According to Danielle Scharf, principal and Bozeman regional manager at Sanderson Stewart, there was little in the way of unexpected questions and commentary from the roughly 20 members of the public in attendance.

“People were mostly concerned with the hassle of the traffic, but we think all will be happy in the end with the results,” Scharf said.

Sanderson Stewart began design plans for upgrades to Lone Mountain Trail as far west as the main entrance to Big Sky Resort and as far east as the intersection of U.S. Highway 191 back in November 2019—those installations include nine left-turn lanes and at least one traffic signal, upgraded wildlife, pullout, curve warning and illegal parking signage, and expansions to trails, bridges, tunnels and other pedestrian walkways adjacent to the road.

“The design process is well underway,” Scharf said. “Most of the projects that were in the original application are still in the application ... right turn lanes were always considered optional because the Department of Transportation was always concerned with safety and sight issues they might create.”

For Carr Strauss, the meeting signified years of work and progress coming to a head.

“From the announcement to actually now seeing the actual work feels like an eternity,” Carr Strauss said. “We’re so enthused to see things coming to fruition.”

Planned upgrades using TIGER grant funds

- Install left-turn lanes at key intersections to ease congestion and enhance safety.

- Install northbound lead left-turn phasing (i.e., signal up grades at MT-64/U.S. 191)
- Left-turn lanes at Powder Light Subdivision (Ace Hardware - East)
- Left-turn lanes at Powder Light Subdivision (Ace Hardware - West)
- Right- and left-turn lanes and new traffic signal at Little Coyote Road
- Left-turn lanes at Market Place (Meadow Village)
- Left-turn lanes at Huntley Drive
- Left-turn lanes at Big Pine Drive
- Left-turn lanes at Andesite Road
- Left-turn lane at Big Sky Resort Road

- Install signage and related improvements to enhance road safety conditions.

- Wildlife signage and pull-outs
- Curve warning signage
- Eliminate unauthorized roadway shoulder parking by Conoco (MT 64)

- Expand safe facilities for pedestrians and non-motorized users, including:

- Grade-separated pedestrian crossing tunnel under MT-64 near Little Coyote Road
- Extend trail from MT-64 near the intersection with Little Coyote Road to the Big Sky Community Park and add pedestrian bridge crossing over West Fork Gallatin River
- Extend existing paved trail along south side of MT-64 from Big Pine Drive to Andesite Road

Chief William Farhat to receive fond farewell

BY DOUG HARE



Looking back on his eight-year tenure at the BSFD, Chief William Farhat is proud of the legacy he leaves, especially the 21 employees he hired whose constant learning day-in and day-out has prepared the department to respond to a host of emergency situations. PHOTO COURTESY OF CHIEF WILLIAM FARHAT

BIG SKY – On Friday, Jan. 24, Big Sky Fire Station #1 will host an open house appreciation party for Chief William Farhat’s committed service to the Big Sky community over the last eight years.

Chief Farhat has been fighting fires for nearly 30 years in four different states, and in Big Sky since 2011, when he took over the position as BSFD Fire Chief. The experienced first responder is set to become the Fire Marshal for the Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, Florida, overseeing fire safety and programs in the eighth largest district in the U.S. with

215,000 students, 2,500 employees and over 200 schools.

“It’s a great transition. This is my 31st year of being a first responder. That’s a lot of years of waking up in the middle of the night or working on weekends and holidays,” Chief Farhat said. “I’m looking forward to more work/life balance.”

Farhat began his distinguished firefighting career in Buchanan, Michigan, in 1989, working for the Bertrand Township Fire Department for five years before studying paramedicine, eventually becoming a paramedic in Denver in 1992. After attending a police academy in the Denver suburbs, he changed paths and began his career in law enforcement in the small mountain community of Minturn, Colorado, while continuing to serve as a volunteer firefighter.

After the birth of his first child in 1997, he and his family returned to his home state to work as a public safety officer utilizing the skills he learned as a police officer, firefighter and paramedic in his early career. Three years later, Farhat returned to police as a deputy sheriff in St. Joseph, Michigan where he was trained as a fire investigator, a hazardous materials technician, and a Weapons of Mass Destruction regional responder for the state of Michigan after 9/11.

As deputy sheriff, Farhat continued working as a public safety officer and simultaneously held the position of battalion chief for the Chikaming Township fire departments in Harbert, Michigan. Deciding he wanted to turn his professional focus back to firefighting, in 2006, Farhat accepted a position as assistant chief of the University of Notre Dame Fire Department in Indiana, becoming chief the following year.

When he became the BSFD Fire Chief in 2011, there were only eight firefighters and about 10 volunteer employees under his command. Currently, there are 28 full-time employees in the department with plans to hire six more in the future. Farhat will leave his mark long after he changes coasts, having personally hired 21 of the current BSFD employees.

“It’s been great to live and grow here with my family. Even amongst mountain towns, Big Sky is a unique place,” Farhat said of his departure. “I will miss the staff I work with. They are an uncommonly good group of people. It’s a big family and everyone knows each other really well. That’s going to make it hard to walk away.”

Deputy Chief Greg Megaard will serve as interim chief for the BSFD while the board of trustees forms a hiring committee to fill the vacancy. Established in 1979, the Big Sky fire district stretches from the Karst community in Gallatin Canyon south to the Rainbow Ranch Lodge area; and from Gallatin River to the far western end of Moonlight Basin. While only officially responsible for these 80 square miles, the department typically responds within a 200 square mile range.



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New walleye and perch regulations now in effect on Holter Reservoir

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS



COURTESY OF CRYSTAL ASH

WOLF CREEK – Anglers are reminded of a regulation change that began Jan. 1 for walleye and perch fishing at Holter Reservoir south of Great Falls.

Yellow perch limits are now 25 daily and in possession. Walleye limits are now five daily, only one larger than 25 inches; and the possession limit is twice the daily limit.

The changes will be listed in the new fishing regulations, which will be out in time for the new license year that begins March 1. New hunting and fishing licenses that are required starting March 1 are usually available for sale in mid-February.

Gov. Bullock grants \$320,000 to Native American businesses

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

HELENA – Gov. Steve Bullock recently awarded \$320,000 in funding to support the growth of 25 Native American-owned businesses across Montana through the Indian Equity Fund Small Business Grant program.

Each business will receive between \$7,000 and \$14,000 to help with costs related to land purchases, building, equipment, assets, technology, operational costs and working capital.

The Indian Equity Fund builds partnerships with tribal governments by investing in Native American entrepreneurship and small businesses and encouraging economic development in tribal nations for the benefit of tribal communities and members.

Candidate filing for the 2020 election in Montana has begun

ASSOCIATED PRESS

HELENA – Candidate filing for the 2020 election in Montana began at 8 a.m. Jan. 9. The two-month filing period continues through 5 p.m. on March 9.

Candidate filing for positions such as county commissioner and justice of the peace also began Jan. 9 at county election departments.

Montana's primary election is on June 2.

Yellowstone Park visitation at lowest level since 2014

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARKS

MAMMOTH HOT SPRINGS, Wyo. – In 2019, visitation to Yellowstone National Park was at the lowest level it has been since 2014. The park recorded over 4 million visits, a 2.3 percent decrease from 2018 and a 5.6 percent decrease from the record-breaking year in 2016.

More data on park visitation, including how we calculate these numbers, is available on the NPS Stats website.

Visit irma.nps.gov/STATS to learn more.

Yellowstone Visits by Year

2019	– 4,020,287
2018	– 4,114,999
2017	– 4,116,525
2016	– 4,257,177
2015	– 4,097,710
2014	– 3,513,486

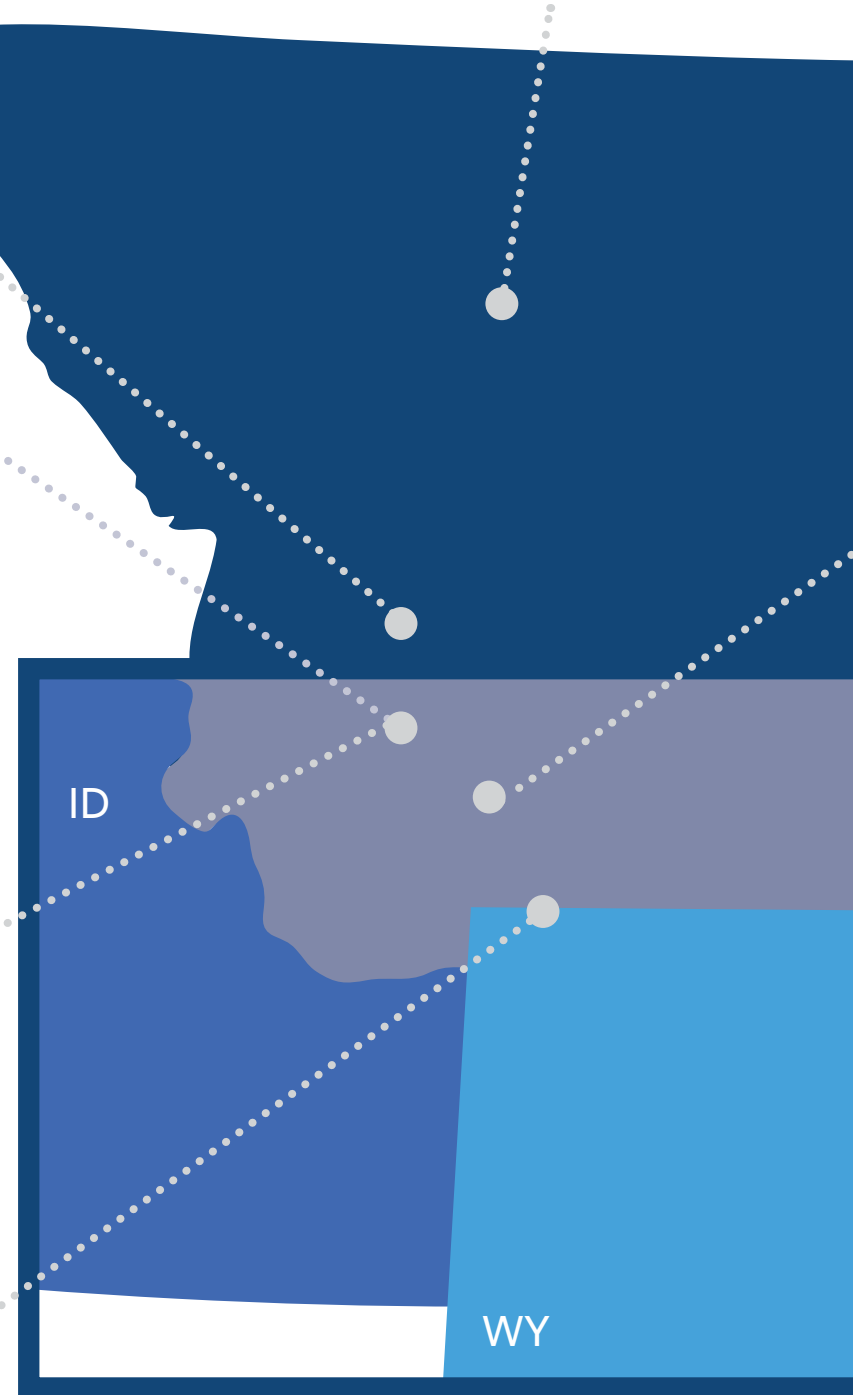
Montana tribe to celebrate

ASSOCIATED PRESS

GREAT FALLS – The Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians is celebrating its 100th anniversary with a celebration on Jan. 25 in Great Falls. The tribe signed the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2017, which granted the tribe federal recognition, officials said.

The free celebration will be held at the Holter Reservoir. Tribal members said. The celebration includes dining, dancing and council members.

The public is also invited to attend a pipe ceremony, tribal members said.



Deputies at Wyoming jail now required to wear body cameras

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHEYENNE, Wyo. – Deputies who work in a Wyoming county jail are now required to wear body cameras. It is the first program of its kind in the state, Sweetwater County Sheriff's officials said.

Sweetwater County Detention Center uniformed deputies on all shifts must record any contact with an inmate or staff who are in an inmate zone, with some privacy exceptions, according to a statement by the sheriff's office. The recordings are saved and available for official review.

Sheriff's officials said the cameras instill a higher level of professionalism and public trust. Misconduct complaints have plummeted since patrol deputies started wearing body cameras in 2016, and they hope to replicate the success in the future.

ate federal recognition with public

f Chippewa Indians of Montana has announced plans to host a celebration comes about one month after President Donald Trump Act containing an amendment giving the Little Shell Tribe feder-

iday Inn from 5-10 p.m. and is open to the public, tribal council ner, traditional music played by fiddlers and speeches by dignitaries

eremony the same day at 1 p.m. at the Shawn Gilbert Event Cen-

2020 Economic Outlook Seminar to visit 10 Montana cities

MSU NEWS SERVICE



BOZEMAN – Two Montana State University faculty members will be among the speakers in the 45th annual Economic Outlook Seminar Series, which will kick off in Helena on Tuesday, Jan. 28. The series will be hosted in 10 Montana cities in the coming months, including Bozeman on Feb. 5 and Big Sky March 19.

Each half-day seminar highlights the latest economic trends for local economies and the state of Montana. Each year during the seminar series, industry experts give their outlooks for Montana’s important sectors, including health care, forestry, travel and tourism, real estate, manufacturing and agriculture. This year, the seminar also will include the outlook for high-tech industries and the startup climate.

For more information or to register, visit economicoutlookseminar.com or call (406) 243-5113.

Montana State seeks STEM role models, sponsors for conference

MSU NEWS SERVICE

BOZEMAN — Montana State University Academic Technology and Outreach is seeking female professionals to volunteer and deliver presentations or serve as role models for junior high-aged girls interested in science, technology, engineering and mathematics careers.

More than 240 girls from across the state are expected to attend the annual Expanding Your Horizons conference, which will take place Saturday, April 18, on MSU’s campus.

The event will offer participants an array of engaging STEM activities in subjects that range from robotics to fossils and astronomy. Volunteers who would like to share their expertise and enthusiasm on a STEM topic will develop a 40-minute workshop and hands-on activity for the conference. Training is offered for new presenters. The deadline to apply is Jan. 31.

Expanding Your Horizons is a national program designed to introduce young women to STEM careers and encourage them to pursue STEM courses in high school and college. MSU Academic Technology and Outreach has hosted the program since 1992.

Businesses and organizations that are interested in financial or in-kind sponsorships are also encouraged to participate.

To apply or for more information, visit ato.montana.edu/ContinuingEd/youth or contact Nicole Soll at nicole.soll@montana.edu or (406) 994-6633.

Wyoming lawmaker sponsoring wolf-kill compensation bill

ASSOCIATED PRESS



CC PHOTO

CASPER, Wyo. – A Wyoming lawmaker is sponsoring legislation to create a new state compensation program for ranchers who lose livestock to wolves.

The bill sponsored by Republican Rep. John Winter, of Thermopolis, would create a fund with \$90,000 to reimburse ranchers over a two-

year period. Currently only livestock killed within wolf-hunting zones in western Wyoming qualify for compensation. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department pays out about \$385,000 a year under the program, the “Casper Star-Tribune” reports.

Under Winter’s bill, ranchers who lose livestock to wolves outside wolf-hunting areas also would qualify for compensation.

Other reimbursement programs have been discontinued since the U.S. government removed Wyoming’s wolves from federal protection in 2018.

The bill would need a two-thirds vote to be introduced during this winter’s legislative session dedicated primarily to the budget. The four-week session begins Feb. 10.

Four bodies recovered from small-plane crash in Montana ID’d

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BILLINGS - Authorities said Jan. 13 that four men from Billings died in a small-plane crash over the weekend in southern Montana.

The coroner identified the pilot as David Healow, 69, and his passengers as Rusty Jungles, 36, Mikel Peterson, 35 and Raymond Rumbold, 32, Yellowstone County Sheriff Mike Linder said in a statement.

Their bodies were recovered from the wreckage of the single-engine Cessna 182 that crashed on Jan. 11. They were taken to the state morgue in Billings for autopsies.

The Federal Aviation Administration said the plane crashed north of Billings after apparently hitting a cable on an antenna tower on a mountain.

Investigators from the sheriff’s office, the National Transportation Safety Board and the FAA spent most of the day at the crash site near Dunn Mountain, Linder said.



With the fourth annual TedxBigSky event fast approaching, who is your greatest inspiration and why?



Stella Haas
Big Sky, Montana

“Andy Warhol inspires me because of his talent at making colors pop! He is an amazing artist.”



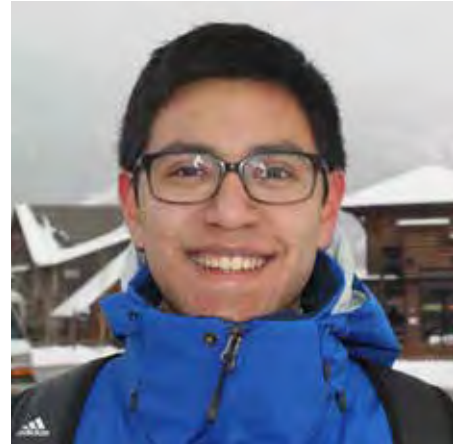
Alei Merrill
Eagle, Idaho

“My grandfather inspires me because he taught me the value of a good work ethic. Even as a little girl he would always talk to me about business, and now I’ve owned my own businesses for the past 28 years. The lessons that I have learned from him are completely invaluable.”



Erik Lovold
Big Sky, Montana

“My father inspires me the most because of all he has accomplished in his life and the things that he has done to help and raise his family. All of the good things that I can think of about myself all come from him—and my mother too of course!”



Gabriel Llanos
Peru, South America

“My parents inspire me because they are the best people to me, and I love them.”

TED^x BigSky
x = independently organized TED event

OUTLAW
EVENTS

BS
Big Sky Life

CONNECTION

Saturday, January 25

Riley Becker | Kate Atwood | Bob Hall | Chris Adams
Michael Peterson & Steven Hawley | Christine Baker
Bobby Gill | Bode Miller | Eric Stevens
Music: Molly Sides & Whitney Petty

Tickets sold out, watch livestream of event at tedxbigsky.com

Obituary: Richard Schultz



Richard Schultz passed away at his home in Big Sky on Friday, Jan. 3, following a three-year battle with colon cancer. He was surrounded by his immediate and extended family; it was a beautiful and peaceful passing.

Richard was an adventurous soul with a kind and loving heart which always kept him centered on the things that meant the most to him:

his wife and two sons, his New York family, and the extended relatives from around the world he generously welcomed into their lives.

Born in New Jersey on Sept. 4, 1957, Richard spent the first half of his life on the East Coast, graduating from high school in Levittown, New York on Long Island, and then receiving an Associate's Degree in Hotel Management from the State University of New York, Delhi, in 1977. After serving in the U.S. Air Force from 1981 to 1983, Richard continued to serve his country as part of the New York Air National Guard where he was a part of the 274th Combat Communications Squadron until his honorable discharge in 1989.

Richard met his future wife, Nazha Eljdid, when they worked together at a hotel in New York; they married on April 13, 1993. Nazha had recently immigrated to the U.S. from Morocco, and Richard embraced his new wife's culture and extended family, converting to Islam at the time of their marriage. The newlyweds' lives took a dramatic turn West several months later, when Richard accepted the job of Executive Head of Housekeeping at Big Sky Resort.

Nazha and her sister Hafida, who relocated to Montana with her new brother-in-law and sister, never forgot their first glimpse of the tiny airport and the miles and miles of empty land. Accustomed to urban landscapes, they both suppressed questions about what, exactly, Richard had gotten them into.

Soon, they got their answer. Richard never lost his New York accent, but Montana quickly became home to him and Nazha as well as Hafida, who married and moved down the street. After several years of employment at a Big Sky Resort, Richard became a maintenance manager for Lake Condominiums and also began his own business, Atlas Carpet Cleaning. The couple welcomed their first son, Rachid, in 1997, and their second boy, Yasin, two years later.

The sense of adventure that Richard had possessed since he was young and with which he hiked much of the Appalachian Trail meshed with Big Sky culture. An enthusiastic traveler, Richard visited all 50 states in his life and made many trips abroad, and though he had a deep fear of heights, could be found joining his family parasailing, zip-lining and even rappelling from a cliff on a vacation in Mexico.

Along with his family, the Big Sky community was also growing, and Richard, who had become General Manager of the Skyline Bus System, became a much loved and respected community leader in this position. For over 17 years, Richard focused on creating a transit system that met the needs of all members of the community: seasonal workers, commuters, residents

and guests. Richard understood how many people depended on the transportation system to get to work and back and forth between Bozeman, and was known to check in on drivers on his days off to make sure people were getting the rides they needed. He developed and expanded this core Big Sky service, refining transit schedules, acquiring and maintaining the fleet, and hiring and training drivers.

Richard's willingness to help local nonprofits and children was well known and his ability to make buses available for special needs—dances, sporting activities, practices and Camp Big Sky—enhanced and made many of these events and activities possible. To Richard, the safety and needs of the kids of the community were always a priority.

Richard was an extremely humble person who preferred quiet acts of kindness. A doting dad, he was a fixture at every WMPAC event and Music in the Mountains concert, sitting close to the technical booth where he could quietly observe his oldest son Rachid, who excelled at sound and lighting from a young age. He always supported his younger son Yasin in school and in sports, often creating excuses to pick something up at the grocery store where Yasin is employed, just to see how he was doing. He was supportive of all local kids, attending many sporting events, and was a loyal fan of Lady Big Horns volleyball, cheering on his talented niece Dounia.

Richard's devotion to his wife and his family was boundless. He was an enthusiastic partner in work and life with Nazha, both in her growing property management business and in raising their sons. Their life together was filled with an easy comfort and much laughter. He welcomed and supported many of Nazha's relatives and was especially close to her mother, Radia, who lived with the Schultz's until she passed away.

He is survived by his wife, Nazha, and their two sons, Rachid Schultz (Seattle) and Yasin Schultz (Bozeman). He is also survived by his mother, Jeanne Schultz; his three sisters, Barbara Wright (Ken), Joanne Schultz (Danny) and Nancy McNichol, as well as sister-in-law Hafida Eljdid and brother-in-law Craig Metje, his niece, Dounia, of Big Sky, and his brother-in-law Abdelmalik Eljdid of Bozeman. In addition, he is survived by many members of his wife's family, including sisters, brothers, in-laws, nieces and nephews who live in Big Sky, Bozeman and all over the world. Richard was preceded in death by his father, Richard Dennis Schultz, Sr. and his brother-in-law, Jimmy McNichol.

Richard was laid to rest in the Sunset Hills Cemetery in Bozeman with military honors on Tuesday, Jan. 7. Donations can be made in Richard's memory to the Islamic Center of Bozeman, Montanamuslims.org, Bozeman Health Cancer Center or any cancer research foundation or nonprofit of your choice.

Obituary: Susan Grace Hochhalter-Pope

Sue was born at home May 26, 1949 near Long Lake, South Dakota. Sue was a beloved mother, sister and friend. A forever cowgirl, she was a free spirit who was called to the mountains of Montana. She influenced the lives of others along her path with her whip smart sense of humor and her big heart. Even in her last days she was smiling and singing. She passed away peacefully on January 5, 2020.

OUTLAW™

News from our publisher, Outlaw Partners

TEDxBigSky returns to WMPAC

EBS STAFF

BIG SKY – The fourth annual TEDxBigSky event will take place on Jan. 25 at the Warren Miller Performing Arts Center with doors opening at 4 p.m. The theme of this year's conference is "Connection" and tickets sold to the seating capacity early on Jan. 6.

The Outlaw Partners event is one of the first of the year for 2020. Others will include the 10th annual Big Sky PBR in July, the Big Sky Art Auction, also in July, and the Peak to Sky music festival slated for Aug. 7-8.

Ersin Ozer, Media and Events Director for Outlaw Partners and the inspiration behind the annual TEDxBigSky events, recalled the overwhelming support the event has received since its inception four years ago.

"Our mission at Outlaw is to create connections that inspire others to act, so it is humbling when community members come up to me and thank Outlaw for spearheading the TEDxBigSky effort," Ozer said. "The impact that this event has had not only on Big Sky but worldwide has surpassed any expectation I had when we started this four years ago."

Twelve speakers will share their thoughts and experiences relating to the theme of "Connection" throughout the evening. The following speakers will be presenting: Kate Atwood, Chris Adams, Michael Peterson & Steven Hawley, Christine Baker, Bobby Gill, Riley Becker, Bob Hall, Eric Stevens, Molly Sides & Whitney Petty and Bode Miller. Ozer says this year's theme is already having a trickle-down effect on those involved.

"This event has always been fortunate to have a diverse lineup of speakers but this year with our theme of "Connection" we are also finding that there is a serendipitous connection happening organically between all of the big ideas and the speakers who will share them," he said.

For those unable to attend, the event will be live streamed online through Explore Big Sky's Facebook page and at tedxbigsky.com. "To have an event that is in such high demand is an honor, and we're grateful to be able to livestream the event to those who did not get tickets," Ozer said.

To view previous TEDxBigSky talks visit tedxbigsky.com



Artist Jamie McLean performs at the TEDxBigSky 2019 conference. The theme of this year's conference is "Connection." OUTLAW PARTNERS PHOTO

'Dammed to Extinction' showing at Lone Peak Cinema

In their film, "Dammed to Extinction," Director Michael Peterson and writer Steven Hawley document the trials and tribulations of a group of orca whales group inhabiting the Pacific Ocean off the coast of the western U.S.

Chinook salmon are the primary food source for this particular pod of killer whales, but dams constructed along the Snake River don't allow nearly enough salmon to pass and sustain the orcas' population.

Approximately 1 million salmon are necessary to feed this group of whales each year, but the story doesn't have to end grimly.

"My hope for the film is that it will continue to inspire the public and policy makers to take action to restore a free-flowing Snake River," Peterson said. "This is our best chance to save the southern resident orcas and the salmon they rely on."

"Dammed to Extinction" has earned numerous awards and will be shown at the Lone Peak Cinema on Jan. 24 at 7 p.m. Tickets are currently available at tedxbigsky.com. Peterson and Hawley, who will speak at TEDxBigSky on Jan. 25, will participate in a Q&A to follow the screening, and representatives from nonprofits American Rivers and the Gallatin River Task Force will have information tables at the event to discuss their work and distribute literature.

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Four obsolete dams choke off access to thousands of miles of rivers.
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CONNECTION

Michael Peterson & Steven Hawley presenting at TEDxBigSky

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WRITTEN BY STEVEN HAWLEY DIRECTED BY MICHAEL PETERSON EDITED BY HEIDI ZIMMERMAN

ORIGINAL MUSIC BY DUNCAN KRUMMEL VISUAL EFFECTS BY BARRY THOMPSON

www.dammedtoextinction.com

Yvon Chouinard thinks food could save the planet

BY EMILY STIFLER WOLFE

With hands thick and weathered from decades of rock climbing and blacksmithing, Yvon Chouinard piles veggies onto a plate for lunch. Focused on the organic salad bar at Patagonia's Ventura, California, headquarters, he selects spinach, kale, romaine, edamame, radishes, fennel, quinoa, cashews. By the end he's got a bit of everything. Literally.

In flip-flops, a short-sleeved button-down and what he told me earlier are 20-year old pants (all Patagonia), Chouinard shuffles over to the hot bar where an employee serves us mashed sweet potatoes and black bean patties ("These are really good," he says, grinning.), and then to the checkout counter. As founder and owner of the leading outdoor clothing and gear retailer Patagonia, Chouinard pays for his food in the company's subsidized cafeteria, just like everyone else.

Seated at one of the long tables, we hunch together to hear each other as employees pass us on their way to eat outside. "What's important is a varied diet," he says, "as many different things as you can get." He's referring to the unique nutrients of each veggie on his own lunch plate, but also to eating foods like eggs from free-range chickens, which themselves consume a wide range of plants and insects.

Now 80, Chouinard is all of 5 feet 4 inches tall but remains a giant in the world of rock climbing and conservation. He established cutting-edge climbs in the U.S. and Canada during the sport's 1960s and '70s golden age and got his start in business by forging steel climbing gear in the late 1950s, which he sold out of the back of his car to fund outdoor adventures. Patagonia is now a billion-dollar company that's donated more than \$100 million to grassroots environmental causes. It has long been an innovator in apparel, visual storytelling and activism. A diehard outdoorsman, Chouinard spends around half his time fly fishing and surfing, and half at work. But he's not sitting at a desk trying to sell more clothes. He's out to stop the climate crisis, and he wants to do it through agriculture.

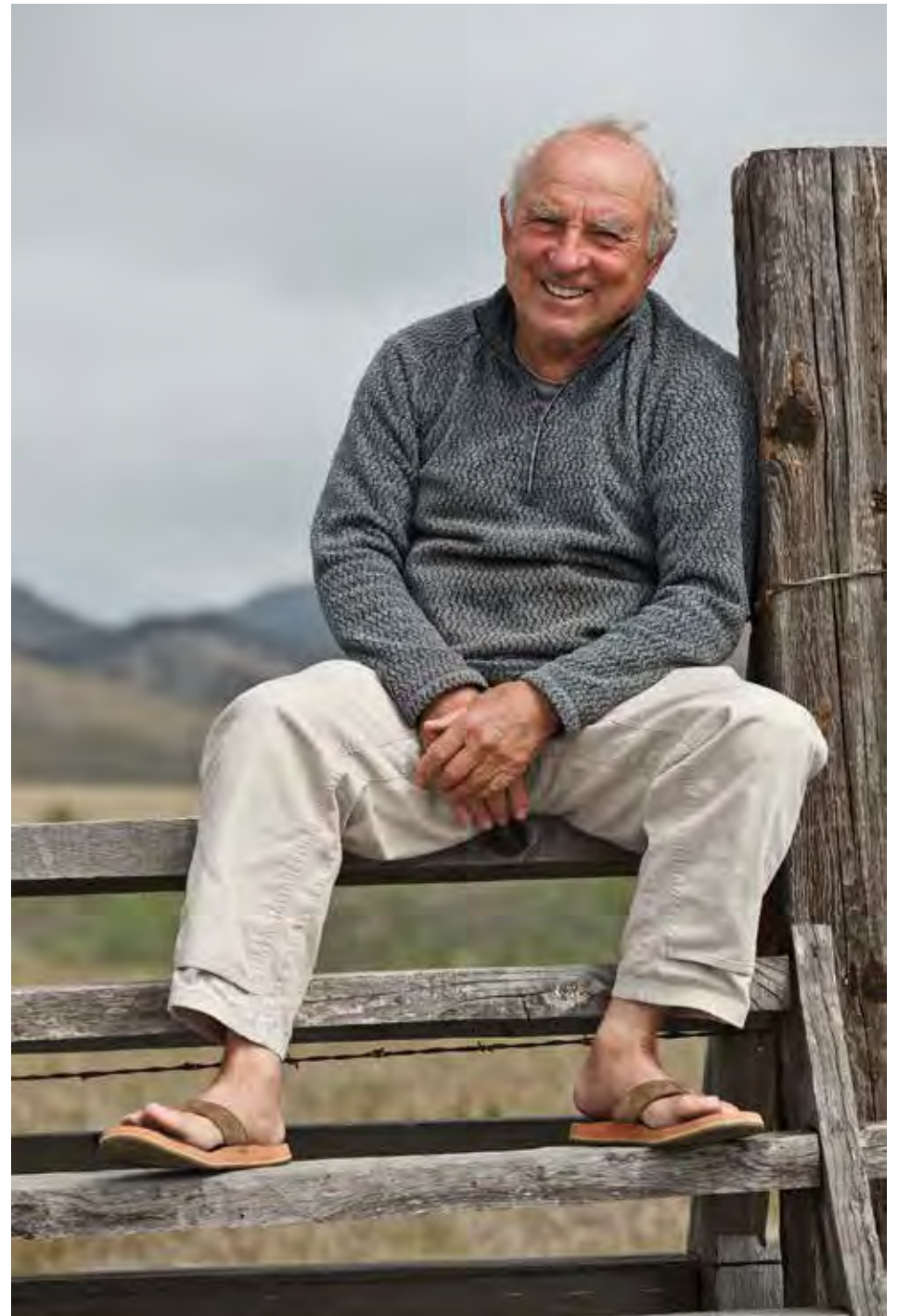
"We're losing the planet. We really are," he told me earlier that morning in his office upstairs, his voice gravelly. "And I'm not going to let it go without fighting, so we have to try harder."

Chouinard, who is sometimes compared to conservation greats John Muir and David Brower before him, has become increasingly vocal about the role of private business in protecting the environment and public land. Maybe you've read how the company's philanthropic giving has benefited the bottom line, how it sued the Trump administration for rescinding a million acres of southern Utah's Bears Ears National Monument, or how it backed Senatorial candidates including Montana Democrat Jon Tester, a conservationist and public lands advocate. Both Chouinard and Patagonia will likely become even louder as they try living up to the company's new mission: "We're in business to save our home planet."

For Patagonia, that means going carbon neutral and non-extractive by 2025, getting deeper into politics, and boosting support for conservation work — Chouinard estimates within five years they'll be giving \$50 million annually to grassroots environmental groups. And in 2012, he started Patagonia Provisions, a separate division of the company that sells sustainably produced and harvested foods like organic grains and responsibly caught salmon. Its goal is to create a market for climate-friendly foods.

If this seems a far cry from outdoor clothing, think again. Patagonia has woven its interest in agriculture into textiles since switching to organic cotton in the 1990s after new T-shirt shipments made staff sick at a Boston retail store. Treated with formaldehyde like many garments, the shirts woke Chouinard to the toxic nature of conventionally grown cotton. But, with little industry demand, Patagonia had to create its own supply chain, something it's since done with hemp, wool, Yulex (a wetsuit fabric made from tree rubber instead of the petroleum-based neoprene), and now food.

"Agriculture as it relates to food is one of the biggest contributors to climate change," said Birgit Cameron, managing director for Patagonia Provisions. Indeed, agriculture and associated land-use account for a third



Yvon Chouinard at his ranch in Wyoming Photo by Jeff Johnson / Courtesy of Patagonia

of global greenhouse gas emissions and 70 percent of water consumption, according to research conducted by the World Bank. But, Cameron says, through regenerative organic agriculture, food may also offer solutions.

This style of land management uses a combination of older farming techniques including crop rotation, reduced tillage, cover crops and livestock integration. The practice can increase yields, reduce costs, improve water and soil quality, and sequester carbon. The idea is to have the water, nutrient and energy cycles mimic those occurring in nature, says Dwayne Beck, research manager at the Dakota Lakes Research Farm in Pierre, South Dakota, and a leader in the field.

"If you don't do that, then the ecosystem collapses. You're mining," said Beck, also a Ph.D. professor in South Dakota State University's Agronomy, Horticulture and Plant Science Department.

The field is growing quickly and studies show it could help solve some of the world's most pressing problems, among them hunger and climate change. Project Drawdown, a science-based proposal to roll back greenhouse gas emissions within 30 years, rates regenerative agriculture as number 11 in the top 100 existing solutions. Beck cautions we need more peer-reviewed science to define which techniques are truly regenerative. Organic production, for example, can be unhealthy for the environment and humans because it's difficult to accomplish without tillage, and organic pesticides aren't regulated or tested at the same level as commercial ones. Practice standards are also needed, and those should be defined with input from consumers and farmers, Beck says, not big business.

But none of that is stopping Patagonia. "We know enough to run down this road as fast as we can," Cameron said. "If we wait for perfection, it'll be too late." This has meant supporting producers, educating consumers

and joining partners, including the Rodale Institute, a research and educational nonprofit, and the soap company Dr. Bronner's, in creating an independent Regenerative Organic Certification. On the clothing side, Patagonia this past year started a pilot program with 166 farmers in India to grow organic cotton using regenerative practices on two- to five-acre plots. The farmers also turned a profit with their cover crop, turmeric. Next year, the pilot will include around 475 farmers, proving that the industry can create jobs.

One of the challenges for the regenerative agriculture movement will be large-scale adoption, although there's momentum there, too: In early 2019, General Mills, one of the country's largest food manufacturers and producer of Cheerios, Annie's and Yoplait, pledged to advance regenerative agricultural practices on a million acres by 2030.

For Chouinard, Patagonia Provisions has shown that business is capable of doing more good than harm, for both the planet and for humanity. That's why he wants to prove that the better something tastes — like a tiny wild strawberry compared to a big store-bought organic one — the more nutritious it is. People will pay for that, he says, and it's the key to success.

During our time together at the Patagonia headquarters, he brings nearly every conversation back to food. I hear how he finally got worms in his home garden (filtering out chlorine from his hose water), about the cancer-reducing properties in wild-grazed bison meat, and about the effects of industrial agriculture on the human microbiome and the environment. I even score his sourdough pancake recipe. In Chouinard's view, all these things are connected. We are all connected. But he knows efforts like Patagonia's would have to gain traction worldwide to make a difference.



Future farmers learn regenerative organic practices in a training program at Rodale Institute in Kutztown, Pennsylvania. Photo courtesy of Rodale Institute

“Every business needs to change their mission statement to saving the planet,” he says. “I really believe we need a revolution, [and] the only revolution we're likely to have is in agriculture. It solves a tremendous number of the world's problems.”

Modifying business objectives may be a tall order in the profit-driven world of modern capitalism but it's critical, and like all lasting change, Chouinard says, it can only start small.

A version of this story first appeared in the Summer 2019 edition of Mountain Outlaw magazine



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SECTION 2: ENVIRONMENT & OUTDOORS



MSU arctic researcher pg. 20



Winter raptor watching pg. 28



Women's ice fishing course pg. 31

THE NEW WEST

The numbers don't lie 25 years after wolf reintroduction



BY TODD WILKINSON
EBS ENVIRONMENTAL COLUMNIST

Anniversary stories are meant to provide a moment of reflection, not only on where we are, but where we've been. Over the years as an environmental journalist covering the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, I've penned many—about the bi-decade commemorations of the Wilderness Act of 1964, the 50th anniversary of the National Environmental Policy Act this year, the Endangered Species Act, remembering the Yellowstone forest fires of 1988, the birth years of Yellowstone and Grand Teton and even the first Forest Service ranger district on the Shoshone National Forest.

This week 25 years ago wolves were brought back to Yellowstone some 60 years after they had been deliberately exterminated from our first national park and nearly all of the American West.

As Mike Phillips who was the park's lead wolf biologist at the time and Doug Smith, his successor, have said, giving wolves a second chance was one of the most momentous wildlife conservation actions in history.

Calls for reintroduction, however, go back much further than that. As a young reporter in Jackson Hole, I remember 1987 being a pivotal year. The Fish and Wildlife Service released its wolf recovery plan for the Lower 48, U.S. Rep. Wayne Owens of Utah introduced legislation that sought unsuccessfully to legally compel the federal government to make wolf restoration happen and President Ronald Reagan's director of the National Park Service was beginning to make waves.

William Penn Mott, former head of the California state parks department, was then in Washington, D.C., and, without warning and chagrin to Republicans, backed reintroduction.

Only eight years later, after much resistance from the ranching and farming industries, some big game wildlife organizations, members of some U.S. senators and members of Congress did it happen. There were a lot of heroes too numerous to name.

One of the people in the trenches was research naturalist Norman Bishop who over the course of his tenure in Yellowstone attended more than 400 public information sessions on wolves. He also helped write the Environmental Impact Statement.

Today, he is backing an effort to bring wolves back to Colorado and later this year it will be put on the ballot before voters in that state. It is said that society learns as time moves forward but there is little evidence that Westerners in Colorado have learned from the lessons about wolves in Greater Yellowstone.

Not long ago, Bishop released some numbers that he compiled, which refute claims that the Western livestock industry and elk herds have been devastated.

Here are the numbers. In 1995 the elk population in Wyoming was estimated at 103,448 and the elk harvest that year was 17,695. In 2017, the elk population was estimated at 104,800—31 percent over objectives set by state game managers—and the elk harvest was 24,535. Notably the average hunter success rate was 35 percent, Bishop reports.

"In Montana the 1995 elk population was 109,500 and I could not find the harvest data for 1995. In 2018, Montana's elk population was estimated at 138,470



The late Molly Beattie, then director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and former Yellowstone Superintendent Mike Finley carried the first crate of wolf transplants into holding pens in Yellowstone in January 1995 just prior to their release. NPS PHOTOS

(27 percent over upper objective) and the 2017 elk harvest was 30,348, some 6,000 more than in Wyoming," he says.

In Idaho, the 1995 elk population was estimated to be 112,333 and the harvest that year was 22,400. In 2017, the Idaho elk population stood at 116,800—4,000 more than when wolves arrived. Notably, 18 elk units were assessed to be at or above population objectives set by the state, while 10 units were deemed below objective for a variety of reasons that certainly include predation but also human harvest, agriculture, habitat degradation and droughts.

In 2017, Bishop says the elk harvest in Idaho was 22,751—300 more animals than in 1995. In 1995, the elk population in Wyoming was 103,448, the wapiti population in Montana was 109,500, and the number of elk in Idaho was 112,333.

Recently, the elk population in Wyoming was 104,800, the population in Montana 138,470 and total elk in Idaho was 116,800. In each of those states, hunter harvests are high.

With regard to livestock, Bishop notes, there were about six million cattle in the northern Rocky Mountains in 2014. The 140 cattle taken by wolves made up one in 43,000, or 0.00023 percent of cattle in the states. There were about 825,000 sheep in the northern Rocky Mountains in 2014. The 172 sheep taken by wolves made up one in 4,800, or 0.000208 percent of sheep in the states.

Finally, the issue of human safety. "Tens of thousands of visitors come in the shoulder seasons to watch wolves," Bishop writes. "On human safety: From 1995 to 2018, Yellowstone hosted 101,070,722 visitors, none of whom was injured by a wolf. Among 2.7 million tent campers in Yellowstone from 1995 to 2018, no camper was injured by a wolf."

Bishop is mentioned in the 25th anniversary story I wrote for "Mountain Outlaw magazine" now on newsstands throughout Greater Yellowstone. You can love wolves or despise them, accept that they are a natural part of our ecosystem or not, but the facts do not lie. Wolves are one reason why this region is the globally-renowned cradle of American wildlife conservation.

Todd Wilkinson is the founder of Bozeman-based "Mountain Journal" and is a correspondent for "National Geographic." He's also the author of "Grizzlies of Pilgrim Creek" about famous Jackson Hole grizzly bear 399.

Water Wisdom

Save money, save water

BY DAVID TUCKER
EBS CONTRIBUTOR

In 2015, the American Water Works Association named Big Sky’s drinking water the best-tasting in the country. Pulled from deep underground, our water contains sweet-tasting minerals like calcium and magnesium. These minerals are perfectly healthy for human consumption, but they can wreak havoc on our home appliances. They can shorten the lifespan of everything from showerheads to hot-water heaters, and they give our teapots and faucets that unattractive white, crusty coating. Because of these minerals, our water is known as “hard water.”

To soften it, we often install filtration systems that utilize salt, but the time has come for a change. Why, you might wonder, should you care at all about your water-filtration system? As long as the water is safe to drink, what is the difference?

Great question.

For one, salt-based filtration systems waste tons of water—literally. The Wilson Hotel recently installed a new, salt-less system and their water savings are estimated at 250,000 gallons annually. That’s a lot of water, and a huge cost savings to boot.

In a salt-based system, healthy calcium and magnesium are replaced by equal parts of sodium, and the significant volume of water used in this process is flushed down the drain. This produces gallons of waste before any water ever reaches our showers, washers or toilets, and turns our high-quality drinking water into unpalatable salt water. Users of salt-water systems must then install another filtration system under their sinks which removes the just-added salt, as well as all of the beneficial minerals in the water, creating water that lacks any mineral content and isn’t healthy for long-term consumption. The result is a series of filtration systems that waste a significant amount of water, are costly to maintain and provide poor-quality drinking water.

So, what is the solution? There is now an innovative water-conditioning media that doesn’t require salt or the consumption of water. With this system, hard water undergoes nucleation in the pressure vessel, transforming calcium bicarbonate into an aragonite form of calcium carbonate crystals. In layman’s terms, this salt-free system softens water without removing beneficial minerals or wasting water. You’ll get all the “best-tasting drinking water in the country” without any waste. They call that a win-win situation.

“Residential users can expect to save about \$500 a year,” says Peter Manka, principal water resource engineer at Alpine Water in Big Sky. “Salt-free systems cost a fraction of what salt-based softeners cost. There’s less maintenance, no moving parts, no salt to buy and less time and energy wasted. Plus they’ll be using—and paying for—less water.”

According to Manka, these systems save about 10,000 gallons of water and 800 pounds of salt per average household annually. With the savings in the cost of water, salt, filter replacements and maintenance, replacing your salt based system can pay for itself in three to four years.

Additionally, that’s a lot less salt. While the Wilson is estimated to save 250,000 gallons of water annually, they’ll also save up to 50,000 pounds of salt. When salt is used to treat water, a portion of that salt ends up back in the environment, contaminating surface water, decreasing the effectiveness of our wastewater treatment system and potentially polluting the watershed. Salt in these quantities is not naturally occurring, and is therefore another unwanted result of salt-intensive softening.

While salt-water softening is still the norm, numerous commercial and residential properties in Big Sky have installed this relatively new salt-free technology. And why not? It saves money, it saves water and it improves overall watershed health and resilience. They call that a win-win-win.

David Tucker is the communications manager for the Gallatin River Task Force.



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REFLECTIONS

Thoughts for sustainable living



Food

BY KATHY BOUCHARD
EBS CONTRIBUTOR

He surveyed the yard cautiously, noting the sheets swaying from the line and the little girls playing near the back stoop. Stepping from the alley on Chicago’s South Side, he skirted the hollyhocks and tentatively, hopefully, made his way along the narrow concrete walk to the back door. My grandmother, working in her kitchen, saw him then, scruffy and unshaven, but only a bit older than her own son Tom. She called the child who would become my mother into the house, then faced the young man.

Their garage had been marked, in some way they never knew, that identified their house as a place that would provide a sandwich, and maybe a glass of milk. My grandmother made those wanderers sit on the steps as she prepared the food, keeping her little ones inside. In the depths of the Great Depression, when Franklin Roosevelt said the nation “was dying by inches,” feeding a stranger was a big ask while struggling to feed her own five kids. Even when her husband turned 50 and was laid off from his delivery truck job so the company could save on pension expenses, she still found something to spare.

Eighty five years later, it is estimated that 30 to 40 percent of food produced in America goes to waste. It is known that people suffer diabetes, heart disease and other afflictions due to their dietary choices. Conversely, food has been used as medicine to treat conditions such as high cholesterol and hypertension. Food can be certified as organic, fair trade or locally grown. Not to mention food plays a deep cultural role in traditions of holidays, hospitality and entertainment. In short, food is complicated.

My niece told me at dinner on Christmas Eve that she would become a pescatarian—one whose animal protein comes from fish—in the New Year, having already given up red meat last April. When asked why, she said it was her way to help “save the planet.”

According to the journal “Science” in a study published in 2018, 18 percent of calories and 37 percent of protein Americans consume come from meat and dairy, yet livestock and their feed take up 83 percent of farmland and generate 60 percent of our greenhouse gases. Experts say that the Western industrialized countries must reduce their meat consumption by 40 percent to meet climate control guidelines by 2050.

Reducing our meat consumption is the single biggest way the average human can fight climate change. By eating those grains ourselves, we’d need less farmland devoted to agriculture, land which might be then used to sequester carbon, as native prairies and healthy forests are known to do.

“The Meat Lover’s Guide to Eating Less Meat,” an article by Melissa Clark and published by the “New York Times,” cites a number of reasons why she is trying to contain her inner carni cravings. But she also gives a six-step program of what to eat instead. This includes more beans—think chili—more high protein grains including pasta, and even meat substitutes like Beyond Meat. Clark writes that when she does allow herself red meat, she will make it count. I’m thinking Beef Wellington at Chi-co’s, and I only had that eight years ago.

So this year will be a challenge for me as I face a freezer full of meat, try to buy little more, and wonder how to prepare appealing and delicious plant-based meals. Many of my younger relatives are way ahead of me. They are my inspiration.

As fires ravage a parched and overheated Australia, we all need to move forward to save our planet, to paraphrase FDR, from dying by degrees.

Kathy Bouchard is a member of the Rotary Club of Big Sky’s Sustainability Committee. She has been a Montana resident for 20 years and is inspired to work for sustainability on behalf of her grandchildren.



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MSU arctic researcher earns presidential fellowship from Chinese Academy of Sciences

BY REAGAN COLYER
MSU NEWS SERVICE

BOZEMAN – Montana State University professor John Priscu was recently awarded a prestigious, yearlong fellowship from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, an honor that will facilitate further research into polar ecology in the Himalaya and other extreme terrains.

Priscu, a Montana University System Regents Professor in the Department of Land Resources and Environmental Sciences in the MSU College of Agriculture, first visited China in the 1990s to lecture about his work in Antarctica. He is one of the nation's leading researchers in Arctic biogeochemistry and his 36-year career includes publications in magazines such as "Time" and "Scientific American" and academic journals such as "Science" and "Nature," among dozens of others.

"You think of Antarctica and you typically think of this giant, lifeless iceberg," said Priscu. "It's pretty hard living on the surface, but underneath it's not so bad. Beneath the Antarctic ice sheet lies our planet's largest wetland. It might not have the red-winged blackbirds and the cattails, but it's permanent water overlying water-saturated sediments, and it's got bacteria that drive reactions such as methane production, all of which are defining elements of a wetland."

About a decade ago, Priscu began receiving academic manuscripts from colleagues in China that focused on research similar to his own. He formed a partnership of editing and reviewing those manuscripts for publication. Then in 2011, he received an email from Yongqin Liu at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Tibetan Research Institute who was interested in pursuing her sabbatical in Priscu's MSU lab.

Liu spent the 2012-2013 academic year in Bozeman where she and Priscu studied data collected from Himalayan glaciers, examining the climate record contained in ice cores extracted from a depth of about 300 feet.

"The cores act like a time machine," Priscu said, "or like the rings of a tree." Those 300-foot cores held insights into what those environments were like dating back to around 1959.

DNA sequences of bacteria showed that before 1990, bacteria in the northern Himalaya had origins from windblown soils in eastern Europe, whereas those in the southern Himalaya originated from the marine waters of the Bay of Bengal and were carried to the mountains via Asian monsoons. To Priscu's and Liu's surprise, after 1990 the bacteria in the southern Himalaya began to look more similar to those from the soils of eastern Europe, a trend that was related to increases in soot, or black carbon, deposited on the glacial surfaces, drawing a connection between the industrialization of western China and the dynamics of Himalayan glaciers.

"Glaciers in the Himalaya represent the third largest reservoir of ice on our planet," said Priscu. "Glacier-fed rivers originating from the Himalayan mountain ranges influence the lives of about 40 percent of the world's population. These glaciers are melting faster than the polar ice sheets due to factors like industrialization and climate warming."



MSU professor John Priscu and Chinese Academy of Sciences researcher Yonqin Liu stand in front of a glacier in the Southern Himalaya. Priscu, who has partnered with members of the Chinese Academy of Sciences for over nearly a decade, was awarded the Academy's Presidential Fellowship for Distinguished Scientists this winter. PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN PRISCU

His work with Liu is providing important new insights into the fate of Himalayan glaciers.

After publishing a series of papers with Liu and further collaboration with other members of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Priscu began traveling to Xinjiang in northwest China and to Tibet to conduct research on mountain glaciers and give lectures. He recently hosted a doctoral student from the Tibetan Research Institute and continues to collaborate with Liu, head of her own laboratory back in China. They have recently worked together on Priscu's field teams to study icy systems in Antarctica and Alaska.

This winter, Priscu was awarded the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Presidential Fellowship for Distinguished Scientists for 2020. The fellowship will take Priscu, who routinely visits five or six continents each year, on an extended trip through China this summer. He will give a series of lectures in Beijing, Nanjing and Lanzhou in northwestern China, followed by conducting hands-on research on glaciers around 18,000 feet above sea level in the Tangula Mountains in Tibet.

The study will focus on microbial communities that live in sediments on the surface of those glaciers and examine the roles that these microbes play in glacial chemistry and the absorption of solar radiation, the latter of which can enhance surface melting.

For Priscu, it will be the continuation of more than 36 years of international teamwork, discovery and scientific advancement.

"I have been lucky to have received funding from the National Science Foundation and NASA to study the geobiology of ice in Greenland, Antarctica, Alaska and the icy worlds in the outer solar system," Priscu said. "I have been equally lucky to work with Dr. Liu and other scientists from the Chinese Academies. Working with my Chinese colleagues is inspiring. Science is clearly an international language that has few intellectual boundaries."

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Wintertide Yellowstone

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many available pass times. With frigid temperatures and deep snow, the landscape and its inhabitants are transformed. In honor of the season, the editors of EBS have selected a handful of stunning wintertide shots that capture the breathtaking experience of winter in Yellowstone.



Overlooking the boardwalks near Canary Spring during winter NPS PHOTOS



A bobcat prowls along the Madison River



Hoar frost caused by thermal steam accumulates near the edge of a hot spring at Mammoth Hot Springs.

INSIDE YELLOWSTONE



Yellowstone's Lower Falls from Lookout Point



Skiers and snowmobilers travel a snow-packed road in Yellowstone



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A mule deer buck dredges through deep snow.



A snowcoach used to transport visitors in the winter cruises through the snowy forest.

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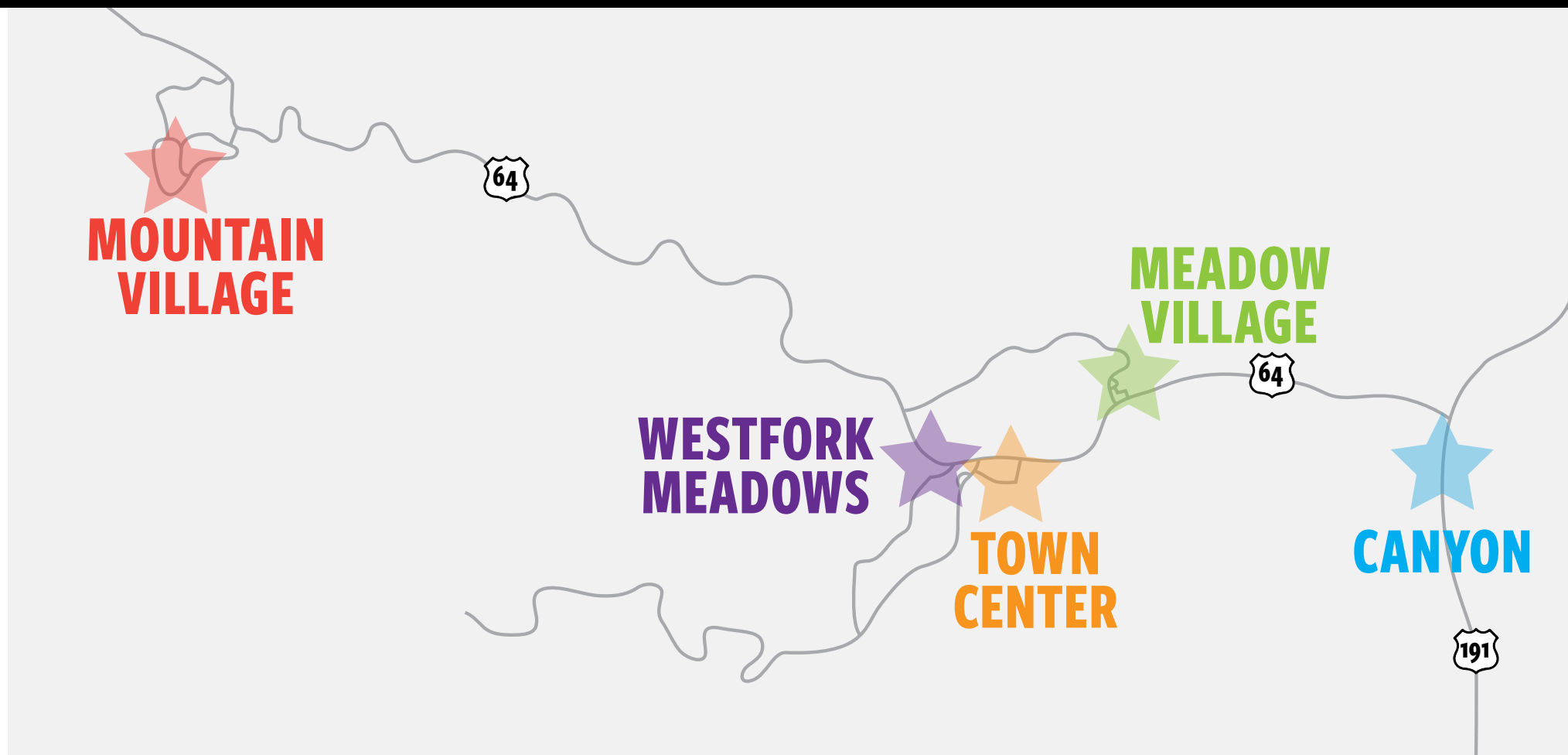
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Two men sentenced to ten days in jail for thermal trespass violations

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

MAMMOTH HOT SPRINGS, Wyo. – Two men were recently sentenced for trespassing on the cone of Old Faithful Geyser, a closed thermal area. Eric Schefflin, 20, of Lakewood, Colorado, and Ryan Goetz, 25, of Woodstock, New York, appeared in court on Dec. 5, 2019, before U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark Carman at the Yellowstone Justice Center in Mammoth Hot Springs, Wyoming.

Schefflin and Goetz pleaded guilty to the violation of thermal trespass. On Sept. 10, 2019, at about 8:30 p.m., employees and visitors witnessed two individuals walking on the cone of Old Faithful Geyser and reported it to park dispatch. A ranger contacted and cited Schefflin and Goetz.

Sentencing for each included 10 days of incarceration, \$540 in restitution, five years of unsupervised probation and a five-year ban from entering Yellowstone National Park.

“Visitors must realize that walking on thermal features is dangerous, damages the resource and is illegal. Law enforcement officers take this violation seriously. Yellowstone National Park also appreciates the court for recognizing the impact thermal trespass can have on these amazing features,” said Chief Ranger Sarah Davis.

The ground in hydrothermal areas is fragile and thin, and there is scald-




Two men were recently sentenced for thermal trespass after walking across the cone of Old Faithful Geyser in September 2019. NPS PHOTO

ing water just below the surface. Visitors must always remain on boardwalks and exercise extreme caution around thermal features.


Visit go.nps.gov/yellsafety to learn more about safety in thermal areas.


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Corduroy Cruises

BY SARA MARINO
EBS CONTRIBUTOR

There's nothing like setting your skis or fat bikes down on a freshly groomed trail of crisp corduroy. Look no further than the Big Sky Community Park in the Meadow Village to find a trail to play on.

The Big Sky Community Organization is once again conducting winter grooming in the park three times a week to keep conditions prime for cross-country skiing, fat biking, snowshoeing or walking with your dog. There are three groomed trails and one ungroomed to choose from.

Little Willow Way

Rating: Easy

This flat 1.6-mile roundtrip groomed trail starts in the Big Sky Community Park by the river pavilion playground and follows the West Fork of the Gallatin River the entire way.

Community Park Loop

Rating: Easy

This gentle loop winds around the entire park, behind the skate park and softball fields for approximately ½ mile. It can be easily connected to the Far East Loop at the east end of the park, or to the 1-mile easy Crail Trail on the west end of the park near the softball fields.

Far East Loop

Rating: Easy

This short ¼ mile out-and-back begins near the camp yurts and provides a groomed trail to access the Black Diamond Trail.

Black Diamond Trail

Rating: Intermediate

This is the only trail not groomed in the Community Park but gets well packed down by users. This trail provides a nice climb into the trees right off the bat, levels off for a short distance, and winds through the forest again on the descent. Once you have reached the end of the trail, you can turn around and travel the same terrain or continue onto Little Willow Way.

What to Know

Uses: All trails are multi-use and cross-country skiers, fat bikers, snowshoers, walkers and dogs are all welcome. Dog waste stations are provided to pick up after your pet. Please no equestrian use, as it is very hard on the trails.

Fee: These trails are managed by BSCO and are open to the public free of charge. Voluntary donations to help with grooming expenses and trail maintenance are always welcome.

Directions: From Meadow Village, head north on Little Coyote Road and drive past the Big Sky Chapel and pond. Turn onto the first road on your right and look for the Big Sky Community Park entrance sign. The parking lot near the basketball court and skate park will be plowed throughout the winter.

Visit bscomt.org to learn more about Big Sky's parks, trails and recreation programs.

Sara Marino is the Big Sky Community Organization community development manager. BSCO engages and leads people to recreational and enrichment opportunities through thoughtful development of partnerships, programs and places.



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Winter raptor watching

BY JEANNIE COUNCE
EBS CONTRIBUTOR

Just because hunting season is over, it doesn't mean you should stop watching the wonders of Montana wildlife. In fact, the crisp blue winter skies and snow-covered mountains are an ideal backdrop for raptor watching.

These aerial predators—eagles, owls, hawks and falcons—are capable of fantastic in-flight maneuvers that are more visible in the stark white winter landscape.

Since 1988, Montana Raptor Conservation Center has been rehabilitating injured birds of prey from across the state and educating the community on the importance of raptors in the environment. Whether you're carving turns on the ski hill, crunching along on a trail or après-skiing by a big picture window, the experts at MRCC suggest you watch for these seasonal raptor behaviors.

Look for rough-legged hawks, which have flown south from Alaska and Canada to winter in this area. Because they live and breed in the arctic—between latitudes of 61 and 76 degrees north—rough-legged hawks are one of the few hawk species to have feathers down to their feet for insulation.



Snowy owls can be identified by their piercing yellow eyes and thick white mustache. PHOTO BY BECKY KEAN

While up north, these hawks feast on lemmings and nest on cliff sides. Here in the Lower 48, they can be found in open country hunting small rodents.

"The weather influences how long they stay, but rough-legged hawks usually begin heading back to the tundra sometime in March," said MRCC Director Becky Kean.

Gyrfalcons are another arctic species that sometimes make their way to Montana for the winter. The largest falcon in the world, the gyrfalcon is as fast as a peregrine, but is silvery white with black spotting. They can also appear in shades of gray and dark brown.

"Their hunting areas and diet are similar to the rough-legged hawk, but their hunting style is typically to spot prey in flight or from a high perch and strike from above, driving it to the ground," MRCC's Assistant Director Jordan Spyke said. "You can also see them perched on the ground."

The ultimate winter migrant is the snowy owl, according to Kean. "People love to spot these beautiful, curiously white owls, but they can be elusive," she said. Their appearance here depends on several factors, including their population and that of their food source—lemmings and ptarmigan—as well as weather patterns.

"Usually, the first-year birds make the trip south while older birds stay on the tundra," Kean explained. "So, when we see snowy owls, they are young and pretty green." That inexperience can get them into trouble.



Look for bald eagles soaring over southwest Montana during winter, especially near rivers and streams. PHOTO BY JERRY TAYLOR

"They're not used to humans, and don't realize the danger of things like moving cars. We've treated a few snowy owls over the years, but they don't do well in captivity," Kean said. "As magnificent as they are, I'd rather see one out in the wild than up-close in the hospital setting."

The heaviest North American owl—great grays are taller, but lighter—snowy owls are white with piercing yellow eyes and a thick white mustache. Both young males and females have black or brown markings, but the patterns are usually heavier on the females, making them look more variegated. Like rough-legged hawks, snowy owls have feathered feet, which make them look wide and sturdy at the base. They often perch on rises on the ground, hay bales and fence posts, and fly close to the ground.

There is no shortage of bald eagles in southwest Montana this time of year, according to Spyke. "They are pretty easy to spot and never disappoint," he said. Bald eagles congregate near flowing water, so watch for them near rivers, streams and dams.

"This is also a good time to scout out eagle nests because there are no leaves on the trees," Spyke said. "The nests are gigantic—5 to 6 feet in diameter and 2 to 4 feet deep—so they are easy to spot. Remember these locations and watch for young fledglings in flight training this spring."

A version of this article first appeared in the Jan. 6, 2017, edition of EBS.

Jeannie Counce is a Bozeman-based writer and editor. She is a board member of the nonprofit Montana Raptor Conservation Center, which has a mission to improve the welfare of raptors across Montana through rehabilitation of injured birds, community education and partnerships for raptor conservation and research.



Rough-legged hawks are one of the few hawk species with feathers on their feet because they breed in the Arctic. PHOTO BY BECKY KEAN



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Women’s ice fishing course comes to Bozeman in February

EBS STAFF

BOZEMAN – Becoming an Outdoors Woman, a program by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks intended to encourage women to experience the outdoors, will host an ice fishing course in Bozeman on Feb. 7-8.

This class is for the beginner or intermediate ice angler who wants to learn or improve her fishing skills. At the Friday evening class, up to 20 participants will learn about ice fishing gear, dressing to stay warm and how to be safe on the ice. On Saturday, Feb. 8, the group will fish on the ice and try out ice augers and fishing shelters—hopefully hooking a few fish along the way.

According to Sara Smith, the program coordinator for BOW, beginning in the classroom is a way to promote confidence and ensure participants are comfortable once they get out on the ice.

Aligned with the mission of the BOW program, the course will serve as a chance to try out ice fishing, and with all gear provided—additionally, participants will not need to purchase a fishing license to fish during the course.

BOW hosts ice fishing courses across the state in the wintertime and also hosts programming on shoeshoeing. During the warmer months, courses range in topics from archery and canoeing to outdoor cooking and camping, to name a few.

“In Montana winter can get really long,” Smith said, adding that BOW is



Participants during a Becoming an Outdoors Woman ice fishing course in Billings last year try their hand at catching fish. PHOTOS COURTESY OF BECOMING AN OUTDOORS WOMAN

trying to encourage just one more way to get outside in the winter. Beyond getting outside, Smith said there’s also a great reward in ice fishing. “You can catch fish and then take it home to make dinner with,” she said.

The class will meet Friday, Feb. 7 at the Bozeman Fish, Wildlife and Parks office from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., and fishing will commence Saturday, Feb. 8 from 9 a.m. to noon at a location determined by ice conditions at the time of the course. Registration is required in advance and fills quickly.

Visit fwp.mt.gov/education/bow for more information.



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FWP seeking applicants to Region 3 Citizens Advisory Committee

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS

BOZEMAN – Region 3 of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks is seeking applicants to fill vacancies in its Citizens Advisory Committee.

The committee meets several times per year and operates in an advisory capacity to help FWP be responsive and effective resource managers within the constraints of the law. Citizen advisors help identify emerging trends and resolve conflicts, and they act as FWP ambassadors to various interest groups and geographic communities.

FWP employees benefit from having a deeper understanding of public priorities and expectations with help from citizen advisors, who can function as a trusted sounding board for ideas and initiatives. People who volunteer in this capacity benefit from understanding FWP programs, priorities, administrative processes and limitations in a broader context.

FWP is seeking applicants representing a variety of interests from communities across southwest Montana within Region 3.

For more information or to apply, contact FWP at (406) 577-7891 or send an email to Morgan.Jacobsen@mt.gov. The application deadline is 5 p.m. on Jan. 31.

FWP season setting public comment extended to Jan. 27

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS

HELENA – Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks is seeking public input on hunting season proposals for 2020 and 2021 hunting seasons and public comment has been extended through Jan. 27.

The department is holding public meetings throughout the state to provide information and take public input on a wide variety of topics.

Comments may be submitted online, verbally or in writing at one of the public meetings, emailed to fwpwld@mt.gov, or by mailing to FWP Wildlife, PO Box 200701, Helena MT 59620-0701.

All comments must be submitted by 5 p.m. Jan. 27, 2020 and the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission will adopt final proposals during their Feb. 13 meeting.

Visit fwp.mt.gov/hunting/publicComments/2019/biennialSeasonSetting.html or youtu.be/6ceksx0NPOU to learn more about the hunting season proposals.

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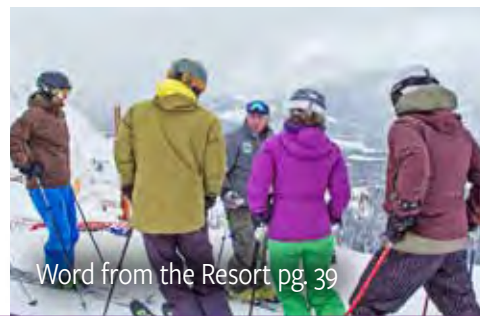
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SECTION 3:
SPORTS, BUSINESS,
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THE LONE PEAK PLAYBOOK



Kruer leads Twin Bridges past Lone Peak

BY BRANDON WALKER

TWIN BRIDGES – A game-high 21 points from Charlie Kruer coupled with a complementary 18 from Matthew Kaiser helped guide Twin Bridges over Lone Peak High School in varsity boys basketball action on Jan. 11, 64-20.

Big Horn head coach John Hannahs viewed the game as a learning opportunity for his team. “We got the opportunity to play one of the best teams in the state. I am hoping that it helped us prepare for two very important games this weekend,” he said.

Playing on the road for the second evening in a row, the Big Horns struggled to score against the Falcons. The third quarter was LPHS’s unraveling as Twin Bridges blanked them 21-0 in the frame. Lone Peak was able to end things on a positive note by matching Twin Bridges’ offensive output, 7-7, in the final quarter.

“I think we are in a very good place defensively. I think the majority of the shots we take are good shots, they just aren’t falling at this time. We also need to find a way to get easy baskets in transition. That has been a goal of ours for the last couple of weeks,” Hannahs said.

Senior Austin Samuels and junior Michael Romney paced LPHS in points with 8 apiece. Samuels rounded out his night with 2 boards and a steal, while Romney added 5 rebounds and 3 steals of his own for the Big Horns. Lone Peak dropped to 0-8 with the loss and will host the West Yellowstone Wolverines on Friday, Jan. 17.

Box Score	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Lone Peak	9	4	0	7	20
Twin Bridges	22	14	21	7	64

Lone Peak: Austin Samuels 8, Michael Romney 8, Nolan Schumacher 2, Frankie Starz 2

Twin Bridges: Charlie Kruer 21, Matthew Kaiser 18, Connor Nye 9, Bryce Nye 6, Tate Smith 6, Nate Konen 2, Trystan Harmon 2



Big Horn junior Michael Romney (black jersey) fires a shot against Shields Valley on Jan. 4. PHOTO COURTESY OF JILL BOUGH



LEADING LONE PEAK

Michael Romney – Junior #15

Lone Peak junior Michael Romney has been a versatile asset for the Big Horns all season. He consistently contributes across all statistical categories and recently he was tasked with learning a new position by his head coach John Hannahs. “My pick for Leading Lone Peak this week is Michael Romney. He has been among the top scorers in the last two games and he recently took on the position of point guard. He is doing a great job of running the offense and taking on a new leadership role,” Hannahs said. Romney hasn’t missed a beat settling into his new position as he has been averaging upwards of 6 points and 5 rebounds per game. Over the past four contests, in total, the junior has contributed 25 points, 21 rebounds, 7 assists, 5 steals, and a block.

PHOTO BY BRANDON WALKER

THE LONE PEAK PLAYBOOK



Falcons soar past Lady Big Horns late

BY BRANDON WALKER



Big Horn junior Ivy Hicks (11) looks for an open teammate in a matchup with Shields Valley on Jan. 4. PHOTO COURTESY OF JILL BOUGH

TWIN BRIDGES – A strong second half from the Twin Bridges Falcons helped them steal a victory away from the Lone Peak High School varsity girls basketball team on Jan. 11, 39-34.

Freshman Maddie Cone gave it her all, pouring in a game-high 21 points for the Lady Big Horns, but it wasn't enough to overcome the tenacity of the Falcons. Cone's yeoman effort included 16 rebounds, 3 steals, and 2 assists to go along with her game-high scoring effort.

LPHS had the early momentum and was even leading at halftime, 16-

11, before Twin Bridges went on to outscore them by 10 points in the second half to secure the victory. The Falcons were led by Ashleigh Guinnane who had 16 points, putting up 8 of those in the final quarter to put the game away.

Lady Big Horn head coach Loren Bough cited adjustments made by the opposing coach as a key factor in sparking the Falcons comeback. "We broke the press beautifully and [Twin Bridges coach] applied a very aggressive half-court man defense that flustered our girls and led to some unnecessary turnovers," Bough said after.

One game removed from shooting only 9 percent from the free throw line as a team, the Lady Big Horns were able to stem the tide by shooting 60 percent (12-of-20) from the charity stripe against the Falcons.

"We really had trouble getting into an offensive rhythm given the intense man-to-man pressure and Twin Bridges is a school with a long basketball tradition," Bough said.

Juniors Ivy Hicks and Sara Wilson contributed 4 points apiece for Lone Peak. Wilson also grabbed 4 rebounds and 2 assists, while Hicks chipped in 5 rebounds, 2 steals, and an assist.

The Lady Big Horns are now 4-4 on year. They will host the West Yellowstone Wolverines in their next contest on Friday, Jan. 17.

Box Score	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Lone Peak	7	9	4	14	34
Twin Bridges	6	5	11	17	39

Lone Peak: Maddie Cone 21, Ivy Hicks 4, Sara Wilson 4, Carly Wilson 3, Jessie Bough 1, Kate King 1

Twin Bridges: Ashleigh Guinnane 16, Avery George 7, Allie Dale 4, Ayla Janzen 3, Kara Dale 3, Hadley Johnson 2, Emma Konnen 2, Lexie Stockett 2



LEADING LONE PEAK

Maddie Cone – Freshman #31

Freshman Maddie Cone has been a force for the Lady Big Horns all season long, putting up points and grabbing rebounds in bunches. LPHS head coach Loren Bough acknowledged the stellar effort put forth by his rookie center. "A fantastic ninth grader performance. Maddie delivered half the points we scored on the weekend and was the leading rebounder," Bough said. Over the course of her last four games, Cone has averaged over 12 points and 9 rebounds per game. In Lone Peak's last four contests., the freshman has scored 50 points, hauled in 38 rebounds, handed out 10 assists, and stole the ball 9 times.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JILL BOUGH

High-level hockey coming to Town Center Rink

BY DOUG HARE

BIG SKY – On Saturday, Jan. 25 at 5 p.m., a ceremonial puck drop at Town Center Rink will break the ice for a hockey match between the Bozeman Stingers and Sun Valley Suns. The game will be free to the public, and will include music, a drink garden and a youth skate with the Stingers from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The event will mark the first time that Big Sky has ever hosted teams from the Black Diamond Hockey League, comprised of mostly ex-junior, collegiate and professional players. The league is made up of the Jackson Hole Moose, Sun Valley Suns, Park City Pioneers and the Bozeman Stingers, with games typically attracting hundreds to thousands of fans.

“The Stingers have been around for about 12 years. In 2014, we became a non-profit. We’ve been playing around ski towns in the Northern Rockies for a while now,” said Justin Cook, president of the 501(c)4 organization and a player on the team as well. “We thought Big Sky would be a great venue to bring the team. This is the first time, I think, any team in the league has done an outdoor game. We’re treating this like the NHL Winter Classic.”

According to Cook, the Stingers and Sun Valley Suns have the longest running rivalry in the league, although he also noted that the competition is intended to be a relatively amicable affair that will draw attention to Big Sky’s new and improved ice rink as well as the quality of BDHL hockey to Big Sky residents that have never attended a Stingers game.



On Jan. 25, the Black Diamond Hockey League will play its first ever outside hockey match in Big Sky when the Bozeman Stingers face off against Sun Valley Suns at Town Center Rink. PHOTO COURTESY OF JUSTIN COOK

“We’re thinking futuristically about this match. This is something that we would like to be an annual event in Big Sky, something that can continue to grow in upcoming years” said Tony Randall, head of operations for the Stingers. “We really want to draw attention to how special this venue is and hopefully show off the highest level hockey being played in Wyoming, Montana or Idaho.”

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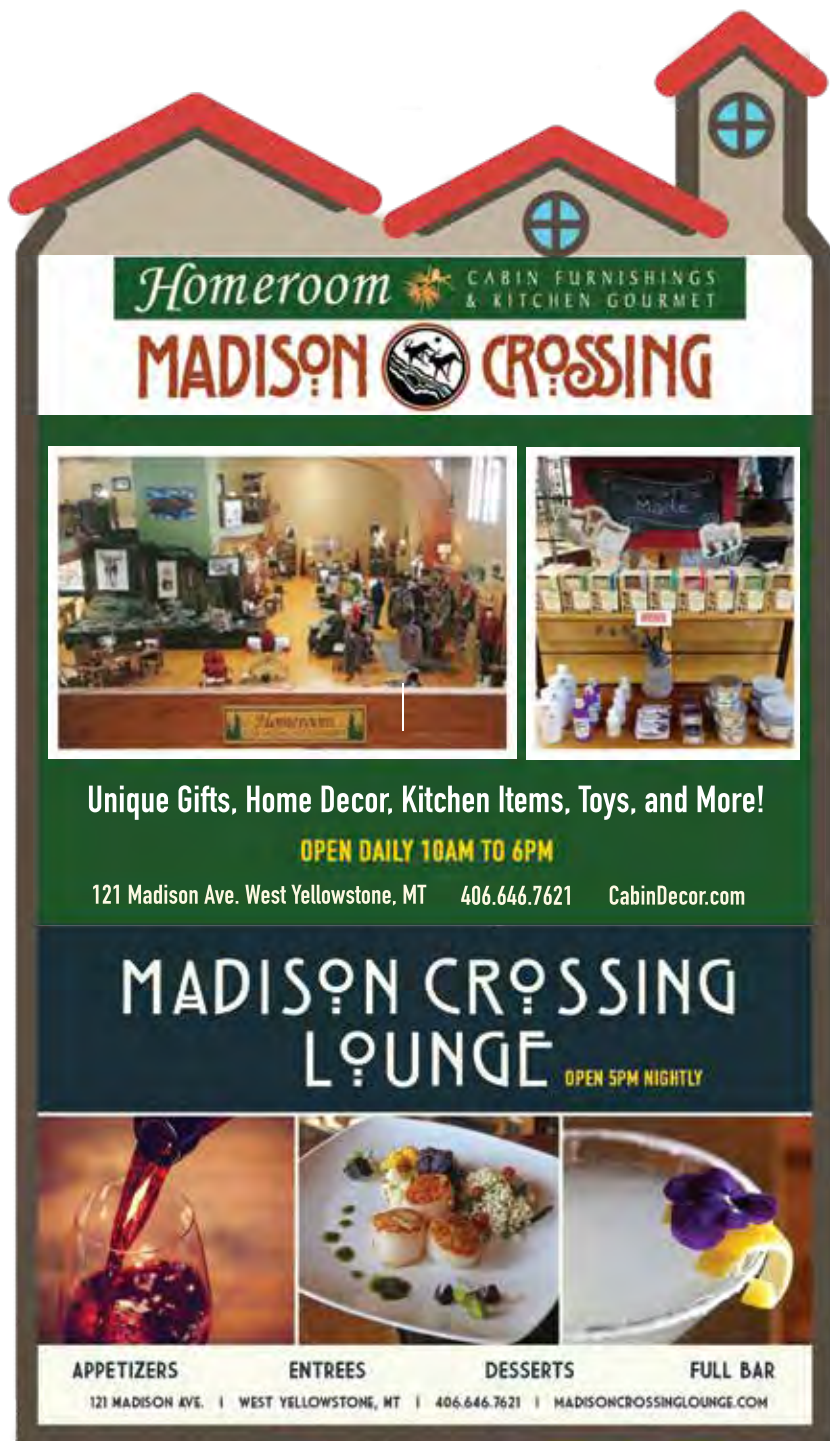
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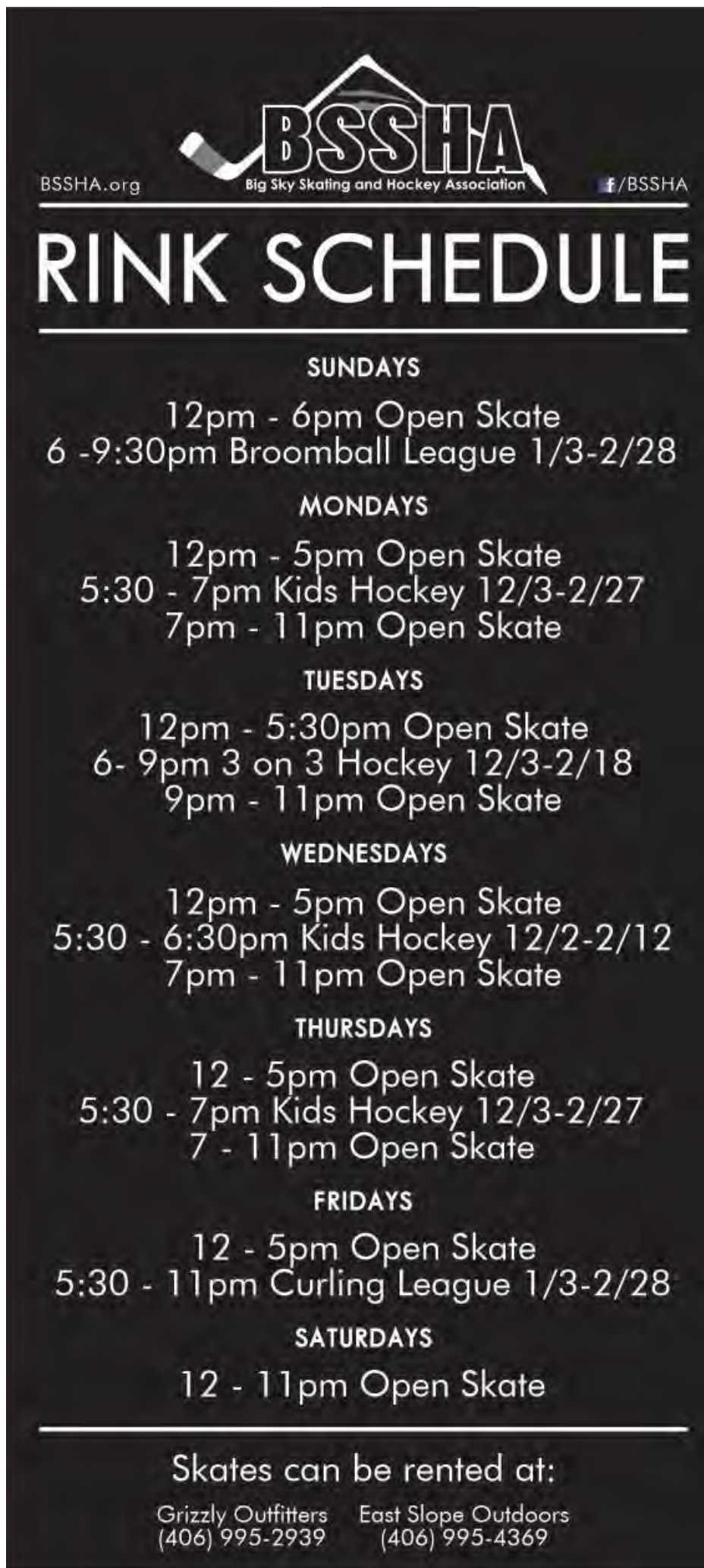


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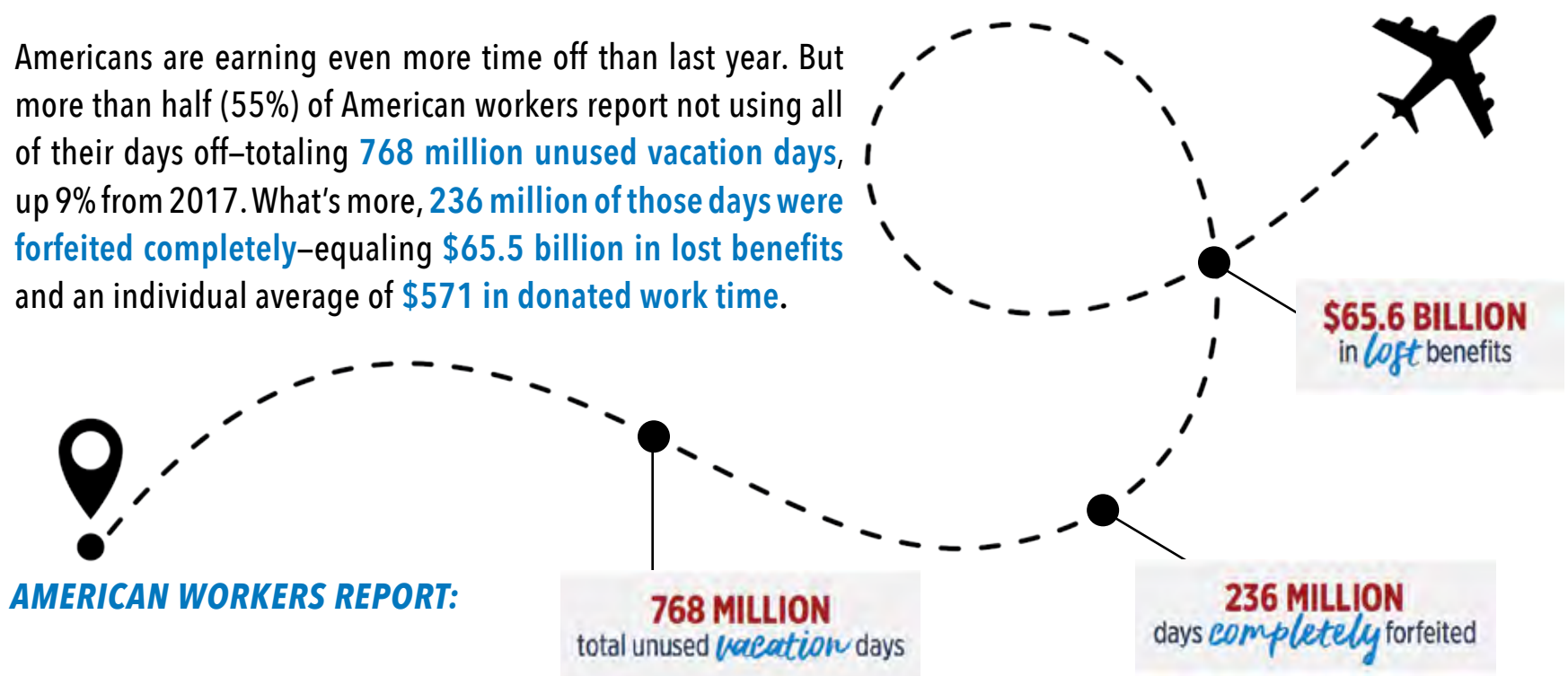
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Word from Big Sky Resort

Your guide to events, activities and news at Big Sky Resort

Ski Big Sky's steeps with one of the most influential skiers of our time

BY EMILY STIFLER WOLFE

BIG SKY – As a kid growing up in New England, I always hoped to see Dan and John Egan—famous extreme skiers and locals at my home hill—while I rode the chair. Those stars never aligned for me, but the ones that did were even better when I joined a Dan Egan Steeps Camp at Big Sky.

Founders of The North Face Extreme Team, the Egans starred in 12 Warren Miller movies from 1985-1994, skiing daring lines in remote locations worldwide. In 1999, Powder magazine named the brothers among the most influential skiers of our time, and last year they were inducted into the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame.

Skiing with Dan—indeed doing anything with him—is an affirmation of everything that is good about our sport. First: the Grin. When he's skiing, or teaching skiing, his love for it is writ large on his face and in his rock-solid technique.

Dan has been teaching steep camps for more than 20 years, and he's one of those people who knows how to make you feel comfortable—on your skis, and in your skin. That, in fact, is his teaching method.

"I come at skiing with a little different approach," Dan said. "I teach the psychological side of skiing. ... People [might be] nervous about certain trails or descents. They want to know how to control their acceleration or learn the strategy and tactics for skiing the North Summit Snowfield. That's where I fit in. I give the Cliffs Notes on how to get down, how to keep up, how to hang with your friends and not feel pressured."

He focuses on mindfulness, relaxation and breathing first, then technique, athleticism and balance. An electrified current of positivity runs through it all.

"When I was looking for a West coast home, Big Sky was a great fit,"



Dan Egan Steep Camps are ideal for skiers looking to break through to the next level. Designed for solid intermediate to advanced skiers, Big Sky Resort will play host to three camps with the legendary ski coach this winter. PHOTO COURTESY OF BIG SKY RESORT

said Dan, who lives mostly in New England but spends more time in Montana every winter. "It's the closest thing to Europe in the Lower 48. It's got amazing snow consistency. It's got the steeps, couloirs and the Headwaters. There is so much terrain and such a variety of terrain here. ... And there's never any lines."

At the Early Bird Camp in December, the group skied all over the mountain—from Challenger to Lone Tree to Liberty Bowl. "It was amazing because the Peak was open and we had great snow."

Dan Egan Steeps Camps are designed for skiers who ski off-piste in variable conditions and want to take their skiing to the next level. Participants will receive three days of guiding and individualized instruction, VIP tram access and video movement analysis session. This year's sessions will be offered Feb. 20-22, Feb. 27-29 (leap year), and March 5-7.

A version of this article originally appeared on Big Sky Resort's blog on June 4, 2019. For more stories, visit blog.bigskyresort.com.

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Word from Big Sky Resort

Your guide to events, activities and news at Big Sky Resort

Big Sky Resort continues leadership in workforce housing

BIG SKY RESORT PRESS RELEASE:

BIG SKY – Big Sky Resort continues to lead area businesses in the number of local-based workforce housing units with this fall’s opening of Mountain Lodge East, a newly-constructed seasonal workforce housing campus with 75 beds, walkable to the ski slopes.

The addition of Mountain Lodge East makes for more than 500 Big Sky Resort workforce housing accommodations in the Big Sky community, four times the industry average. For more than 25 years, Big Sky Resort has been committed to accommodating seasonal workers by constructing, acquiring and expanding housing campuses in the Big Sky community without relying on public funds.

“This is not a one-shot deal. It’s just another step in the long-term commitment that Boyne Resorts and Big Sky have made toward creating affordable and convenient housing options,” said Taylor Middleton, chief operating officer and president of Big Sky Resort. By providing the beds adjacent to the resort, the new campus alleviates stress on transportation infrastructure. “All of our accommodations either have regular bus service or are walkable to work,” said Middleton.

Mountain Lodge East, like other recent additions to the workforce housing inventory, offers occupant-friendly designs with refrigerators, cable TV, microwaves, WiFi and a brand-new laundry facility. Employees are a short walk from work, as well as restaurants, shops and the slopes.

Dormitory-style housing is a centerpiece to Big Sky’s approach to alleviating community housing stresses, says Brian Wheeler, vice president of real estate development for BSR and a member of the Big Sky Community Housing Trust. “Providing these temporary housing options better suits the needs of seasonal workers and frees up more



With the completion of Mountain Lodge East this fall, Big Sky Resort now boasts more than 500 workforce housing accommodations in the Big Sky community, four times the industry average. PHOTO COURTESY OF BIG SKY RESORT

beds in the community for others,” Wheeler said.

Middleton noted that Big Sky will continue to prioritize workforce housing. “Our work here isn’t done—we are already looking ahead to phase two of the Mountain Lodge East campus. Bringing more seasonal workforce housing beds to Big Sky is a win-win for our employees and our community.”

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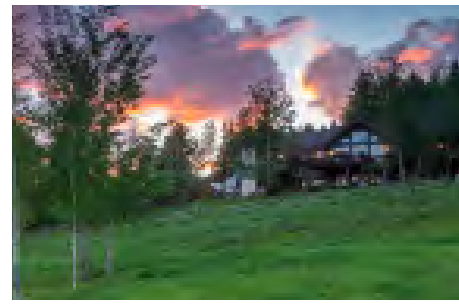


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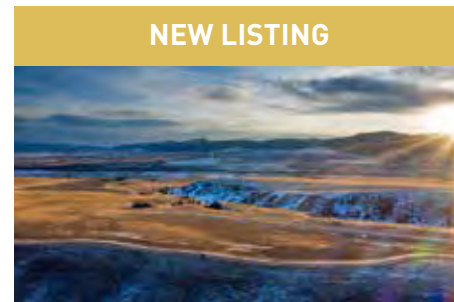
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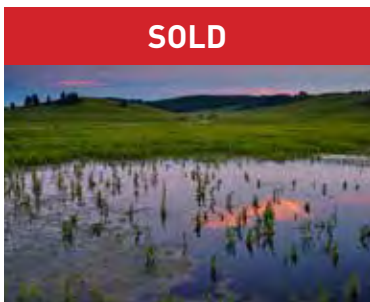
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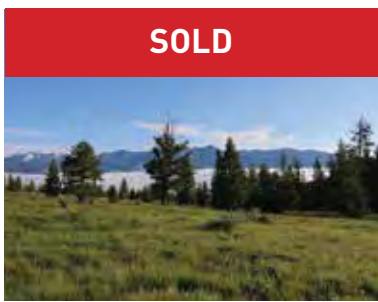
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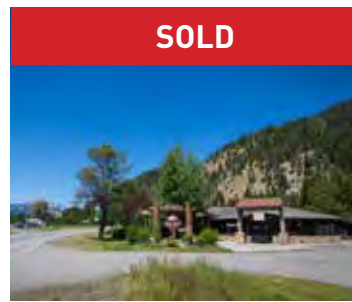
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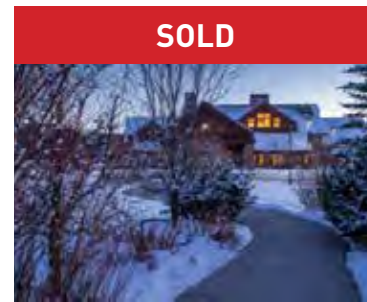
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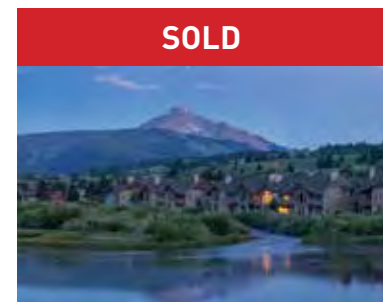
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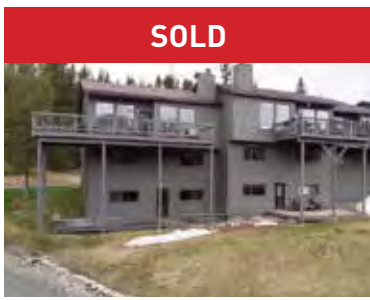


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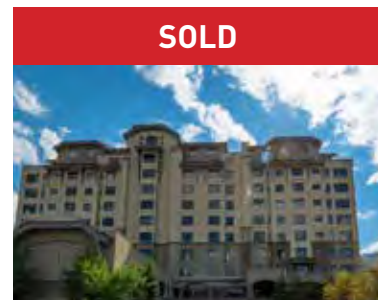


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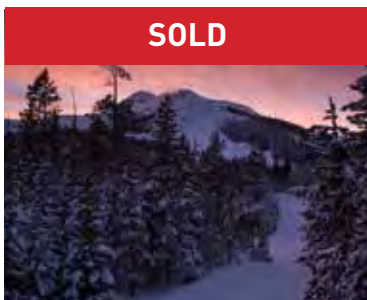
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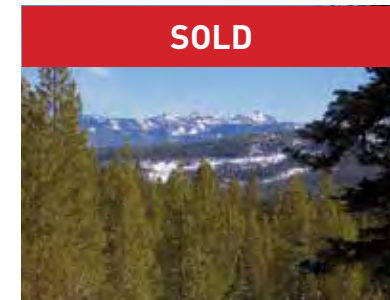
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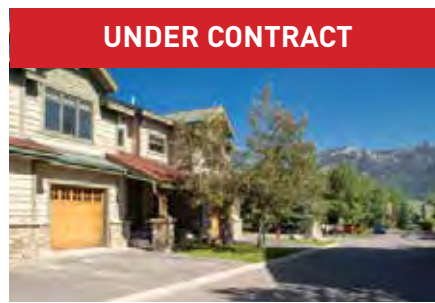


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Hill Condo 1321
440 SQ FT / \$185K



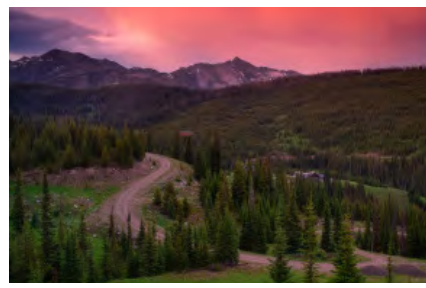
g Buck Road
ES / \$480K



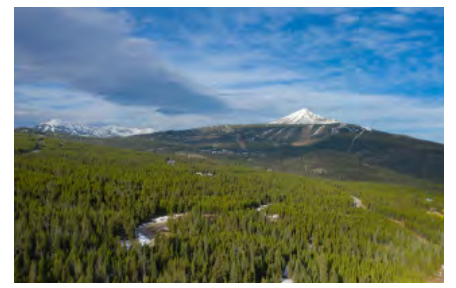
Lot 4 Beaver Creek
20 Acres / \$539K



Bear Paw Ponds Parcel 7
20.04 Acres / \$399K



Lot 3 Joy Road
6.83 Acres / \$395K



Lot 71 Morning Glory
3.65 Acres / \$375K



Marketplace Unit 104
Big Sky, MT
1,204 SQ FT / \$560,920



Marketplace Unit 202
Big Sky, MT
966 SQ FT / \$389K



NEW LISTING

47995 Gallatin Road
Big Sky, MT
Business only with assignable lease
\$25K

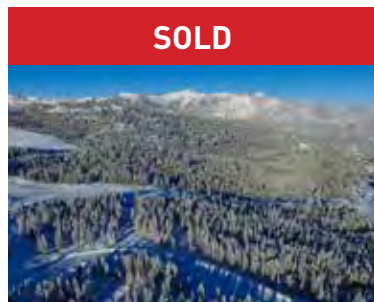


Airport Garages
Bozeman, MT
\$24.9K per unit
Taking reservations for
building G



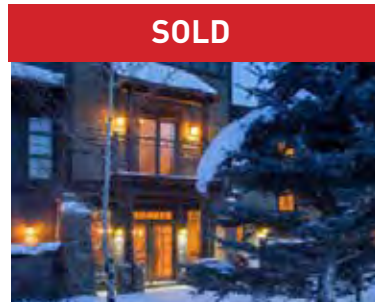
SOLD

2078 Little Coyote List
List Price: \$1.079M



SOLD

Ski Tip Lot 10
List Price: \$975K



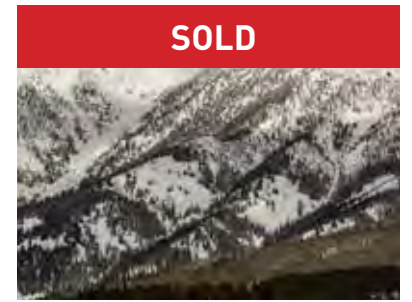
SOLD

81 Pheasant Tail Ln. Unit 2
2,707 SQ FT / \$839K



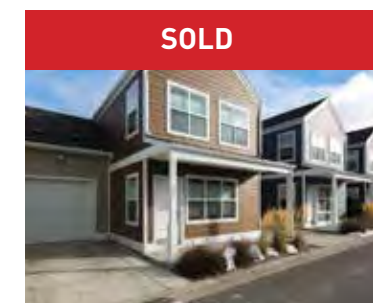
SOLD

Lot 64 Goshawk
1.04 ACRES / \$775K



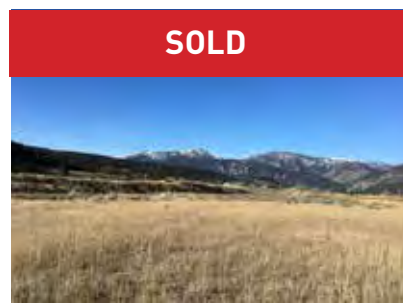
SOLD

Lot 44 Diamond Hitch
1.25 ACRE / \$699K



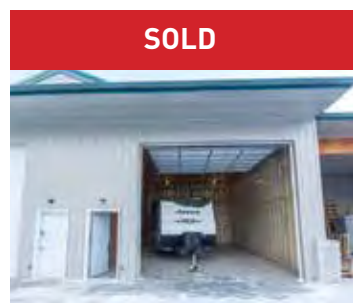
SOLD

412 Enterprise Blvd., Unit 30
Bozeman, MT
1,304 SQ FT / \$315K



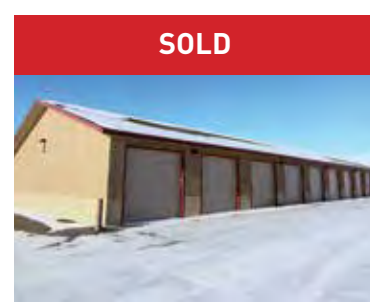
SOLD

COS 2071 Tract 1 Gallatin Road
3.14 Acres / \$299K



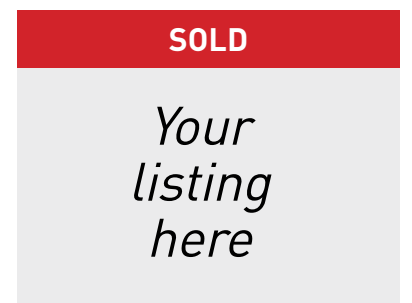
SOLD

47220 Gallatin Rd. Unit #2
840 SQ FT / \$149K



SOLD

Car Park Condo Unit E7
Bozeman, MT
23'x11'x10' / \$24K



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Nonprofit merger looks to enhance, expand mentoring services

**BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF BIG SKY COUNTRY
PRESS RELEASE:**

BOZEMAN – On Jan. 15, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Gallatin County and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Park and Sweet Grass Counties announced their merger into one nationally sanctioned affiliate: Big Brothers Big Sisters of Big Sky Country. Under the leadership of Lander Bachert, the two organizations joined forces officially on Jan. 1. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Big Sky Country will serve community matches and mentorships in Livingston, Gardiner, Bozeman, Big Timber, Ennis, Big Sky and the greater Gallatin area.

Lander Bachert, CEO, is excited to thrive in 2020. “Our ultimate goal is to defend the amazing potential of our youth here in southwest Montana. We believe every child deserves a caring adult in their life.”

By merging, the larger organization will be able to provide better long-term support for the programs already in place and capitalize on the resources of both organizations to serve more children in a “bigger and better” way. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Big Sky Country now spans five counties and covers over 16,000 square miles. A total of 112 matches are supported by the organization, and current school-based programs in Big Sky, Ennis and Livingston public schools serve a combined total of 370 students ages 5 to 18.

Michaella Croskey, Director of Strategic Communications and Events, is one of nine total employees joined together in this new organization. “We’d like to acknowledge our board’s vigilant decision to merge, reducing operational costs that could impede our mission or threaten our organization’s livelihood when economic and political climates inevitably shift.” The board is comprised of 15 community members and welcomes new members from service areas annually, on a rolling basis.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America has over 250 affiliates nationwide and 15 participating countries internationally. The organization’s recent rebrand and revisioning shifts focus from children “facing adversity” to ensuring all children achieve success in their lives, empowered by positive, 1:1 professionally supported relationships.

For more information or commentary, please visit bbbs-bigskycountry.org.



Under the leadership of Lander Bachert, the newly formed Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Big Sky Country will serve community matches and mentorships in Livingston, Gardiner, Bozeman, Big Timber, Ennis, Big Sky and the greater Gallatin area. PHOTO COURTESY OF LANDER BACHERT



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Making it in Big Sky: Avitus Group

Q & A with Michael Rider

The Avitus Group's name was inspired by the story of the Roman soldier Eparchius Avitus, whose innovative strategies, combined with his ability to build long-lasting relationships, led to the defeat of the seemingly unstoppable Attila the Hun—saving the Empire.

Michael Rider, Business Development Specialist, brings a warrior's mentality to helping small Montana businesses simplify their operations, streamline their processes, and achieve their goals. A Billings native, Rider attended Montana State University, graduating in 2011 after playing safety for the Bobcats football team. He returned to coach at his alma mater for four seasons before pursuing his current career path.

Rider developed a passion for the Big Sky area as a child visiting his parent's second home in the Hidden Village in the '90s. Explore Big Sky caught up with Rider to find out more about his passion for helping businesses in the Gallatin Valley, more details about the services provided by his firm, and his advice for owners looking to generate more revenue.

Explore Big Sky: How does your background in athletics inform your approach towards the business world?

Michael Rider: Personally, it was helpful in terms of organization and time management skills. Student-athletes don't get enough credit from a time management standpoint. They've got a lot on their plates day-in and day-out. There is a lot required of you. And resilience—that's a big piece too. There are things that don't go your way as a student and especially as an athlete, and you have to be resilient and have a capacity to bounce back from setbacks in the business world as well.

The value of relationships, maybe more than anything else, was apparent in my college career as well. I made a lot of rich connections that are still important to me. ... So when I go out and meet with business owners I feel more confident in establishing relationships, establishing trust, and convincing people, quite honestly, that you're actually going to do what you say you're going to do. That's a key principle I learned from athletics: you have to be reliable and follow through.

EBS: How does the Avitus Group differentiate itself from other Professional Employer Organizations (PEOs)?

M.R.: We are different from normal PEOs. It's mostly in our interaction with our clients. We're a highly relational company. Not only nationwide—we have clients in all 50 states—but we're a Montana company. We were founded in Billings and there is just something distinct about the Montana way of doing business. I think we set ourselves apart with our high-touch, white-glove approach. From a quality of service standpoint, we're going to be a cut above what most PEOs offer.

EBS: Can you give me an example of how you partnered with a small business and helped them improve their operations?

M.R.: In Big Sky, Buck's T4 has been a longtime client. Blue Ribbon Builders, too. We help service the Yellowstone Club, which is a much larger entity, but the bulk of our clientele comes from small businesses across the Gallatin Valley. As the region continues to grow, there are so many owners in need of assistance—owners who need to get back to working on their businesses and not working in their businesses. We are able to help them not get bogged down with the non-productive, administrative obligations and



Former MSU football player and coach, Michael Rider of the Avitus Group now helps companies in Bozeman and Big Sky find solutions to their most pressing needs. PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL RIDER

focus on things that generate revenue and make them money. We help owners focus on why they got into business in the first place by taking care of all the back-office details.

EBS: What is the best business advice that you've received over the years?

M.R.: Relationships first. People want to do business with people they trust, people they like, so trust is everything.

EBS: What is the biggest obstacle that you face running a business in a Montana ski town?

M.R.: It's not unique to Big Sky, but small to medium-size business owners tend to get sidetracked from the most important aspects of their roles. These owners start their, say, construction company or brewery with the intention of building beautiful homes or brewing beer and being involved with customers. But they get pulled away from the core mission and vision, because every owner also has to deal with things like making sure HR is buttoned up, handle payroll taxes, pay their employees on time, navigate [workers' compensation] and safety, figure out their IT services or how they need to market or re-brand. They're focusing

on all of those things instead of looking at what direction they're headed business-wise and planning for the future to generate a stronger revenue stream.

EBS: Can you go into more specific examples of how your company has helped a company or companies succeed when they were faltering?

M.R.: I think a hot button issue for employers is HR. Montana is a very employee-friendly state. Our bread-and-butter, our most popular service is what we call our co-employer relationship. We handle their payroll, their HR, their benefits and benefits administration, giving them access to a more corporate-style package, and we handle worker's [compensation] certifications and trainings—so it's really our services in one that will keep employers safe and focused on growth.

The most important part of that co-employer relationship is the HR side of things. One example in the Gallatin Valley was a religious discrimination case over whether an employee could wear a beard. This employee filed a wrongful termination and a religious discrimination lawsuit against the employer. What small to medium-size business owner is equipped to handle a lawsuit of that magnitude? That's where we come in with years and years of HR experience and knowledge about how to handle this matter proactively. We know how to go to bat for our employers and keep them insulated from risk. We have lawyers on staff who know how to handle these things and get them out of a sticky situation that could have sunk the ship pretty quickly.

EBS: Makes sense to me.

M.R.: Of course, that's a drastic example. Just giving companies our platform, access to our payroll service, will save owners five hours every two weeks that they can spend on more pressing items. That's kind of like a small papercut that over time can be discouraging and difficult for owners.

Giving employers access to corporate-style benefits is impactful as well by giving companies employee-retention tools like 401ks or dental, vision and health insurance. When they partner with the Avitus Group, they're able to offer those to employees when otherwise they wouldn't be able to. We just want to help however we can.

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Yours in Health

Sugar

BY DR. ANDREA WICK
EBS CONTRIBUTOR

Sugar? What is it good for? Absolutely nothing.

2020 is here and we may or may not have decided to take on a New Year's Resolution. During this new year, sugar has been on my mind. And I would like to encourage you to eliminate sugar addiction in 2020 and decrease your intake.

Too much sugar is poison to our systems. It causes early onset diabetes, weight gain, skin issues, mood swings, a fatty liver and can affect our cardiovascular system. Eating too much sugar also creates a more acidic environment for organisms to live and allows diseases to flourish such as cancer and autoimmune disease.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, the average American consumes about 126.6 pounds of sweeteners every year and the average American eats 22 teaspoons of sugar per day. This would include high fructose corn syrup, refined white sugar and cane sugar. That is a lot of sugar. What is a healthy amount to be consuming? If you have no pre-diabetic tendencies, it's best to not consume more than 25 grams of sugar a day or 6 ¼ teaspoons.

Are you aware of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease? Drinking just one soda per day will put you at risk. High amounts of sugar are difficult for the liver to digest and process. The liver uses fructose—a form of sugar—to make fat and if you are putting too much sugar into your body that fructose causes a fatty liver. Consequently, this fat is also released into the blood stream.

Too much sugar also causes digestive issues related to yeast and candida overgrowth, and too much bacteria in the gut. Yeast, candida and bacteria thrive off of sugar. These bugs wreak havoc on the body and cause the microbiome to be out of balance. Your gut needs good bacteria to maintain normal balance so that the body can naturally fight off candida and bacteria overgrowth. When too much sugar, starch and carbohydrates are in our diet, these organisms flourish and cause such symptoms as brain fog, fatigue, skin rashes, diarrhea, constipation, bloating and weight gain to name a few.

Dr. David Perlmutter of Florida is a neurologist studying the impact of diet and how it affects the brain. He states that anxiety and gut health are directly correlated, and new studies show that depression can be triggered by high sugar intake.

You may be thinking, "OK how do I now decrease my sugar consumption?" The first place to start is adding more natural forms of sugar to the diet to wean yourself off. Stay away from cane sugar, refined sugar and high fructose corn syrup and remember high fructose corn syrup has now been renamed "natural sweetener" and "fructose." It is important to know that "sugar-free" can also be an unhealthy option. Avoid aspartame, sucralose and Splenda as these ingredients are neurotoxins. Great options are raw honey, maple syrup, stevia and coconut sugar. Coconut sugar is great in recipes because it has a low glycemic index. I hope this inspires you to be healthier in 2020!

Dr. Andrea Wick is a chiropractor and applied kinesiologist. She graduated from Life University in Marietta, Georgia, and now practices at Healing Hands Chiropractic in Big Sky. She has a passion for holistic health care and being active in the outdoors.

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NOTICE

NOTICE TO THE BIG SKY FIRE DEPARTMENT FIRE DISTRICT MEMBERS

An Election of one trustee for the Big Sky Fire District Board of Trustees will be held on May 5, 2020.

Declaration of Candidacy forms for the election are available at the Big Sky Fire Department, Station #1 - Westfork Meadows, 650 Rainbow Trout Run, Big Sky, Montana and the Gallatin County Election Department, Gallatin County Courthouse, 311 W. Main Street Room 210, Bozeman, Montana.

Original Declaration of Candidacy forms must be filed with the Gallatin County Election Department no later than 5:00 p.m. on February 10, 2020.

American Life in Poetry

Column 772

BY TED KOOSER
U.S. POET LAUREATE

There's a very fine book, *Poetry of Presence: An Anthology of Mindfulness Poems*, published by Grayson Books of West Hartford, Connecticut, and I've found a number of poems for this column there. Here's another, this one by Ellen Bass, who lives in California, and whose most recent book of poetry is *Like a Beggar*.

The Thing Is

to love life, to love it even
when you have no stomach for it
and everything you've held dear
crumbles like burnt paper in your hands,
your throat filled with the silt of it.
When grief sits with you, its tropical heat
thickening the air, heavy as water
more fit for gills than lungs;
when grief weights you down like your own flesh
only more of it, an obesity of grief,
you think, How can a body withstand this?
Then you hold life like a face
between your palms, a plain face,
no charming smile, no violet eyes,
and you say, yes, I will take you
I will love you, again.

We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts. American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation (www.poetryfoundation.org), publisher of Poetry magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Poem copyright ©2002 by Ellen Bass, "The Thing Is," from Poetry of Presence: An Anthology of Mindfulness Poems, (Grayson Books, 2017). Poem reprinted by permission of Ellen Bass and the publisher. Introduction copyright ©2020 by The Poetry Foundation. The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

- Ravine
- Divest
- Down with (Fr., 2 words)
- Wheel shaft
- Amer. Bar Assn. (abbr.)
- Taro
- Lizard
- Arrowroot
- Indigo plant
- Oak moss
- Bitter (pref.)
- Stripling
- Understanding
- Arabic letter
- John, Dutch
- Interdict
- Tree
- Wild ass
- Axilla
- Sleeveless Arab cloak
- Outer (pref.)
- Of a city
- Pasture
- Rival
- Reddish-yellow color
- Pardon
- Anagram (abbr.)
- Rapid eye movement (abbr.)
- Brother of Cain
- Pheasant brood
- 3 (Rom. numeral)
- Hip
- Fly
- Bacon, lettuce, and tomato (abbr.)
- Hebrew letter

DOWN

- Pledge
- 64 (Rom. numeral)
- She (Fr.)
- Almost
- Quick
- Fetish
- Sheep's cry
- Another
- Judges' bench
- Indian red powder
- Fodder building
- Cotton fabric
- Flightless bird
- Kansas (abbr.)
- Port. colony in India
- Habakkuk
- Also known as (abbr.)
- Punjab inhabitant
- Babism founder
- Alabama (abbr.)
- Bobbsey twins
- Amazon tributary
- Edit
- Pub fare
- Regurgitate
- Without (Fr.)
- Freshwater mussel
- Art movement
- Build a ceiling
- Woodwind
- Nearest
- King of Israel
- Umbrella part

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

C	A	D	S	A	A	L	A	A	R	E	
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Corner Quote

“Above all, do not lie to yourself. A man who lies to himself and listens to his own lie comes to a point where he does not discern any truth either in himself or anywhere around him, and thus falls into disrespect towards himself and others. Not respecting anyone, he ceases to love, and having no love, he gives himself up to passions and coarse pleasures in order to occupy and amuse himself, and in his vices reaches complete bestiality, and it all comes from lying continually to others and himself. A man who lies to himself is often the first to take offense. it sometimes feels very good to take offense, doesn't it? And surely he knows that no one has offended him, and that he himself has invented the offense and told lies just for the beauty of it, that he has exaggerated for the sake of effect, that he has picked up on a word and made a mountain out of a pea—he knows all of that, and still he is the first to take offense, he likes feeling offended, it gives him great pleasure, and thus he reaches the point of real hostility.”

-Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *“The Brothers Karamazov”*

BIG SKY BEATS



“Dust in a Baggie” - Billy Strings

A perennial favorite at Big Sky Resort's yearly bluegrass festivals, Billy Strings (a.k.a. William Apostol) is a spectacle to watch in person. The dexterity of his fingers up and down frets and his strumming technique is nothing less than mesmerizing and his mastery of strings produces an aural intensity rarely equalled in his chosen genre of music. Influenced by a past stint in a metal band, the 27-year-old possesses the ability to evoke Slayer on a banjo, guitar or mandolin with equal aplomb. His meteoric rise as a picker over the last decade has critics comparing him to some of the legendary pickers of the past. Check out the drug ballad “Dust in a Baggie” to hear just how the Lansing, Michigan-native pushes the boundaries of what bluegrass is possible of—incorporating elements of psychedelic rock and jazz—while also remaining true to its core tenets.



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SECTION 4: ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT & DINING

Comedy at WMPAC pg. 50

9th grade art pg. 54

Flatpicking with Zander Chovanes
pg. 60

Montana artist forges emotional connection to wildlife

BY MICHAEL SOMERBY

Imagine, for a moment, the grizzly bear.

The creature leads a dual existence, straddling roles as a symbol of rugged American wildness and that as a notorious icon of political, ecological rift.

They are the stuff of myth and pride, legend and nightmare.

But for young Montana painter James Corwin, mostly their “gentle and observing” soul is abundantly present in his hyperreal re-creations.

The 28-year-old grew in Kalispell, in a cabin with no television or video games, just a rarely paralleled proximity to the wilds of northwest Montana.

“My mom grew up in New Jersey, but her dream was always to have a log cabin in Montana,” Corwin said. “I was forced to spend my play-time outside in nature, acres and acres of forest where I’d go shed hunting and exploring, catching insects and critters to care for them.”

At the time, Corwin had no apprehension that countless moments spent roaming the surrounding forests and fields observing their natural order would ultimately dictate his profession.

It was his senior year of high school, during an art class he chose to round out some missing credits, that Corwin discovered a prescient ability to draw and paint, innate talents that quickly landed him a scholarship that allowed him to attend any art institution in the country.

Since graduating from Marietta College in Ohio, a liberal arts institution where Corwin was a six-generation legacy, he returned to Montana, established a studio in Hamilton and produced dozens of paintings to remarkable acclaim.

Back to the region’s (in)famous bruins—in Corwin’s piece “Monarchs,” a large grizzly idles in tall, summer grasses while observing a Monarch butterfly flapping by.

He has never observed this in the wild, but he has seen the ways in which wild bears exhibit a highly inquisitive, curious, gentle and lumbering nature as they browse for food and suitable places to take a nap.



‘Monarchs’ by James Corwin PAINTING COURTESY OF JAMES CORWIN



Corwin standing in his Hamilton studio, where he finishes an average of one painting per week. PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES CORWIN

So when painting “Monarchs,” Corwin figured why not create this relationship on canvas with a goal of fostering an emotional bridge between observer and wildlife.

“People think they’re so scary and dangerous, and yes they are, but they’re also gentle and observing. I wanted to create an emotional connection with something that can be perceived as aggressive,” Corwin said. “When I choose to feature wildlife instead of landscapes, I know I can portray that emotion much easier.”

Some deem his works whimsical, a quality Corwin says he doesn’t always perceive, but one could argue it is a persistent theme of his work.

For example, “Serendipity III” depicts a grizzly lying on its back looking up at a hummingbird flying overhead; “A Pika and a Bumble Bee” shows the named creatures looking eye-to-eye on a lichen-specked rock next to a bloom of wildflowers; “The Morning Report” has a praying mantis seeming to whisper in the ear of a sleeping raccoon.

Yet, there is a quality of natural solemnity in other pieces, such as “Resilience,” where a bull moose stands in a grove of charred timber, or “Sockeye,” in which a large grizzly rips a live salmon from the water, thrashing it about in the air.

No matter the nature of the composition and the creatures illustrated within them, there is little room to argue that emotional connection has not been established for the viewer—it would require a plain lack of regard for the natural world to claim otherwise.

With growing prestige, pricing some pieces as high as \$30,000 and with commissioned clientele including the likes of Kevin Plank, CEO of popular athletic wear manufacturer Under Armour, it seems Corwin will have no foreseeable shortage in the demand for bringing that emotion into homes and hospices around the globe.

With the fate of wildlife perpetually hanging in the balance, perhaps it is pertinent for us all to consider grizzlies as the gentle souls Corwin has shaped. The notion might just preserve them for generations to come.

Visit jamescorwin.com for more information about the artist and how to purchase a piece.

Mo Amer Brings Groundbreaking Comedy to WMPAC

WARREN MILLER PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

BIG SKY – The Warren Miller Performing Arts Center continues its 2020 Winter Season by welcoming groundbreaking standup comic Mo Amer, a performer with a story that is increasingly common of the American experience, but rarely afforded an audience on the scale that Amer has achieved.

Taking the WMPAC stage on Saturday, Jan. 18, at 7:30 p.m., Mo Amer identifies as a refugee comedian, and might well be the most successful Arab American standup comic working today.

Amer, whose full name is Mohammed Mustafa Amer, is of Palestinian descent, and was born in Kuwait. In 1990, at the age of nine, he fled the Gulf War with his family, eventually settling in Houston. Despite growing up there, declaring himself “a proud Houstonian,” it took him and his family twenty years to gain American citizenship and passports.

Amer’s multi-layered background serves as fodder for his comedy. He began performing standup in high school, eventually gaining a foothold in the Houston comedy scene. By his mid-twenties, Amer was flying around the world to perform at international comedy festivals. Today, he’s performed on five continents and in nearly thirty countries, and is the first-and-only Arab American comic to have performed for U.S. and coalition troops overseas.

It wasn’t long before Dave Chappelle, a legend in the standup comedy scene, took note of the promising comedian and brought Amer under his wing as a mentee. The two have toured extensively together, with Amer opening well over 600 shows for Chappelle, who calls him “hilarious, thought-provoking and inspiring.”



Funny guy: Mo Amer. PHOTO COURTESY OF WMPAC

Touring with Chappelle “was like getting your PhD in standup,” Amer has said, and the two maintain a close friendship. Chappelle even had an off-screen cameo as the announcer during Amer’s 2018 Netflix standup special “The Vagabond.” That special was the first nationally televised standup special by an Arab American, which marked another of Amer’s milestones in the comedy world.



Due to popular demand, a matinee show has been added for the Peking Acrobats. PHOTO COURTESY OF WMPAC

Amer’s comedic style is inclusive and conversational, but he doesn’t shy away from making razor-sharp insights into the current geopolitical situation. After all, he managed to travel the globe as a refugee without a passport for twenty years, so he’s got a few stories up his sleeve. In addition to his Netflix special, Amer has appeared on “The Daily Show with Trevor Noah,” “The Late Show with Stephen Colbert,” and as a recurring character on Hulu’s critically acclaimed show “Ramy.”

Following Mo Amer’s Jan. 18 performance are the Peking Acrobats, a Chinese acrobatic troupe, on Feb. 8. Due to popular demand, WMPAC has added a 3 p.m. matinee show in addition to the sold-out 7:30 p.m. show. The acrobats will perform feats of flexibility, balance and athletics that pay homage to traditional Chinese culture and entertainment, and the earlier timeslot is ideal for families with young children, or those looking for entertainment after a shorter day on the slopes.

Visit warrenmillerpac.org tickets and additional information.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

REEL REVIEW

“Marriage Story”

BY ANNA HUSTED
EBS FILM CRITIC

Writer and director Noah Baumbach famously wrote “Madagascar 3: Europe’s Most Wanted,” a bizarre writing credit in an otherwise notable career. The reason behind such a degrading blunder? Rumors have it he wrote the script to finance his divorce. Perhaps it’s those experiences, times spent in relationships and those in the throes of divorce, that allow the man to have insights into the world of Western courtship.

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“Marriage Story,” a film steeped in realism and simple, bare humanity. STILL COURTESY OF NETFLIX

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Some critics, myself included, have disparaged Baumbach for his continual tears shed and stories centered on those who are very privileged and his perpetually anguished view of life. That said, he writes what he knows and writes well—his characters are not without fault or pain because no human is. This is most apparent in Adam Driver’s Charlie, the co-protagonist of Baumbach’s latest work, “Marriage Story,” as he splits from his wife Nicole (Scarlett Johansson).

While “Marriage Story” is no “Kramer vs. Kramer,” it’s awfully close. Baumbach takes us through the humility, anger and, ultimately, love that is twisted into this couple’s divorce. The writer-director creates deep characters through simple actions, like when Nicole helps Charlie install the booster seat in his rental car for their son, or when Charlie adds plants to his apartment to make it seem more family-friendly to sway the visit of a child custody worker—a thinly veiled, but very human, sham.

Two scenes stand out as exemplary in displaying this simple and bare humanity. One is the climax quarrel of Nicole and Charlie, where everything is said that shouldn’t be. You may have been there before. The other is a poignant moment where Charlie’s son asks him to show the visiting child custody worker the trick he does with his pocket knife, a trick he used to do for Nicole and their son where he fake stabs his arm, but this time, in front of the social worker, he actually stabs himself. It’s a pitiful moment that stands as a metaphor for the loss of his family.

Known for his New York movies, Baumbach often uses the city as a background character. In “Marriage Story” it’s Los Angeles that takes on this role—glitzy, sprawling and full of traffic when Charlie, a New York native battling to hold custody in the Big Apple, visits, and then sun-soaked and blissful when Nicole takes the screen.

Baumbach films will always be worth watching for their complex characters and tone. And it isn’t all bad—the director leaves us on a high note after nearly two hours of ache, with an amicable divorced brace in a Los Angeles no longer bleak, but full of life and sunshine and, curiously, family.

Anna Husted has a master’s in film studies from New York University. In Big Sky she can be found skiing or at the movies at Lone Peak Cinema. When not gazing at the silver screen or watching her new favorite TV show, she’s reading, fishing or roughhousing with her cat, Indiana Jones.



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BSSD 9th graders take aim at photography

Soikkeli-led course builds fundamentals

BY MICHAEL SOMERBY

BIG SKY – New Big Sky School District art teacher DJ Soikkeli has pumped a fresh, youthful perspective into the school’s art curriculum, providing students room to explore their critical thinking and creative process through myriad mediums and projects.

EBS reported in mid-November on the BSSD 8th graders’ stabs at social justice issues, tackled through pop art, in which body shaming, gun violence, rape culture and drug addiction, among other topics plaguing society, took center stage, inspiring conversation and consideration from members of the community.

The 9th graders semester-long foray into photography proved no different, with the young photogs commenting on police brutality, mental health, wealth disparity and light pollution, to name but a few examples, through photographs—with emphasis on lighting, framing and editing in the Lightroom computer program.

Take Ella Henslee’s “Help, I’m Alive” series in which the young photog explored issues with food and eating—particularly in the female population.

“We have expectations that are impossible to reach and that causes people to do harmful things to meet said expectations,” Henslee wrote in her artist statement. “While I was creating this artwork I learned some valuable skills around photography. For example, I learned how to edit my photo so it could be exactly what I wanted. I also learned that

sometimes it takes a few tries before you achieve a desirable result.”

On a seemingly lighter, more playful level, Erin Kaye explored identity through footwear, writing, “The title of my work is called ‘looking into people’s soles’ ... how a shoe can tell what a person is like and what they value.”

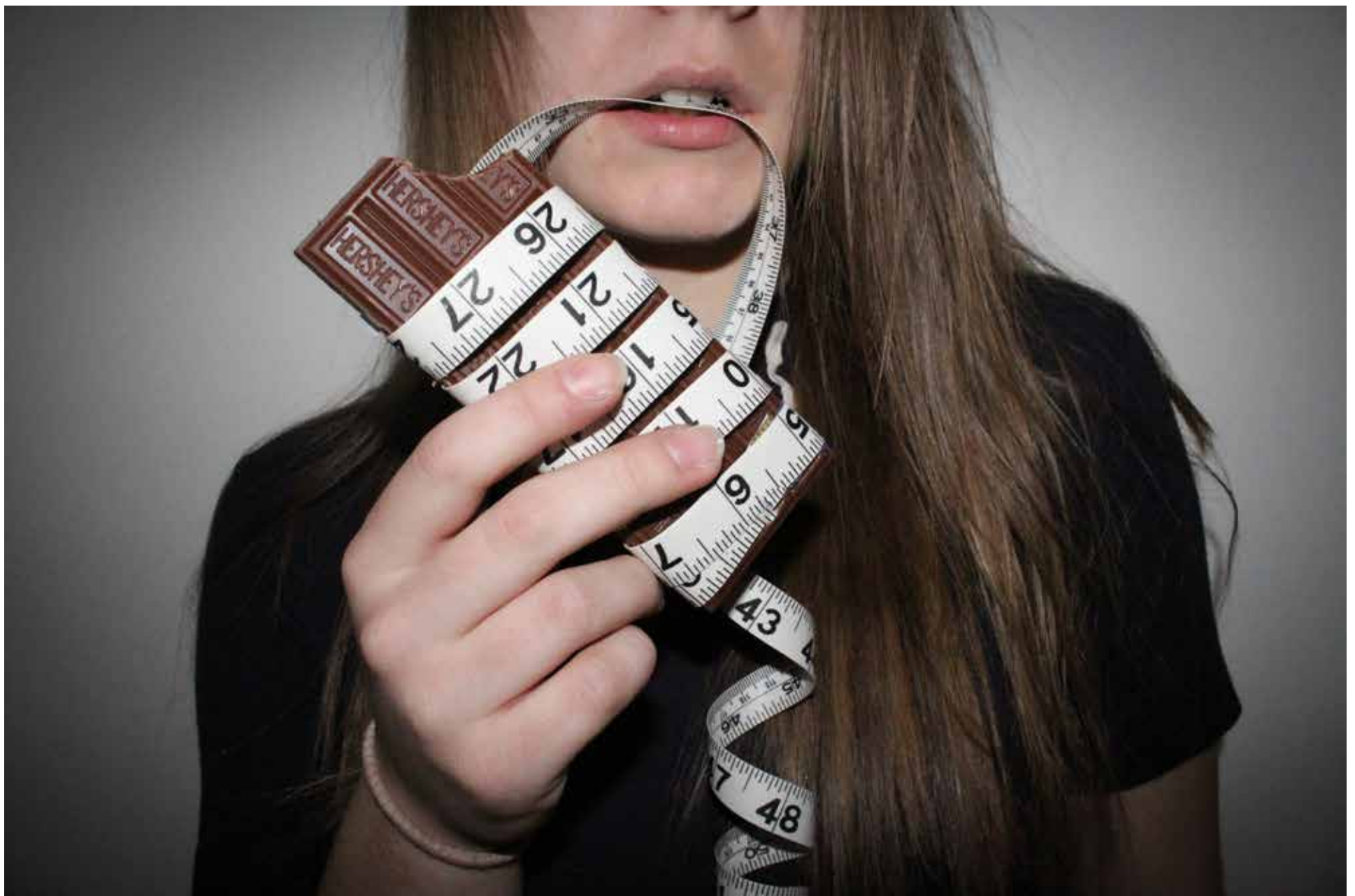
However, there is real commentary to be had: “[The youth bases] their self-worth on the shoes they wear. To me, this is a social issue ... the brand, the style and the price can make another person judge.”

For Orrin Coleman, the course was not only an avenue to study the effects of light and shadow in photography, but also to bring attention to the shrinking dark spaces of the world, places where no artificial light disrupts the beauty of the night sky above.

Through a combination of experimental shutter speeds and angling, “[The focus of] my artwork is the night being broken by light,” wrote Coleman.

For the young artists of the school, they certainly have a friend in Soikkeli, who at the age of 24 is able to neatly provide space for voice and social commentary through art—a calling card of young people worldwide—while also providing the knowledge and tools to further pursue the craft if they so choose.

So long with “say cheese.”



‘Help, I’m alive’ by Ella Henslee PHOTO COURTESY OF DJ SOIKKELI/BSSD



From top to bottom:

'Looking into people's soles' by Erin Kaye
PHOTO COURTESY OF DJ SOIKKELI/BSSD

'Police Brutality' by Kate King
PHOTO COURTESY OF DJ SOIKKELI/BSSD

'Night Being Shattered' by Orrin Coleman
PHOTO COURTESY OF DJ SOIKKELI/BSSD

'Upside Down' by Skylar Manka
PHOTO COURTESY OF DJ SOIKKELI/BSSD



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BIG SKY EVENTS CALENDAR

Friday, Jan. 17 – Thursday, Jan. 30

If your event falls between Jan. 31 and Feb. 13, please submit it by Jan. 22 by emailing media@outlaw.partners

FRIDAY, JAN. 17

Film: Pain and Glory
The Ellen Theater, 7 p.m.

Live Music: Hawthorne Roots
The Filling Station, Bozeman, 8 p.m.

Trivia Night
Lone Peak Cinema, 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, JAN. 18

Sweat and Serve Saturday
Moving Mountains, 8 a.m.

Live Music: Snobar, Round One
Big Sky Resort, 6 p.m.

Live Music: Justin Townes Earle
The Rialto, Bozeman, 7 p.m.

Live Comedy: Mo Amer
Warren Miller Performing Arts Center, 7:30 p.m.

MONDAY, JAN. 20

Live Performance: 15th Nutcracker in a Nutshell
The Emerson Center for the Arts & Culture, Bozeman, 6:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 22

Town Race Series
Big Sky Resort, 2:30 p.m.

Live Music: Zion I
The Rialto, Bozeman, 7 p.m.

THURSDAY, JAN. 23

Adult Pick Up Hockey
Big Sky Ice Rink, 7:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, JAN. 24

Rotary Club of Big Sky Gold Raffle, Auction & Dinner
Buck's T-4 Ballroom, 6 p.m.

Celebration of the Arts
The Emerson Center for the Arts & Culture, Bozeman, 6 p.m.

Trivia Night
Lone Peak Cinema, 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, JAN. 25

Sweat and Serve Saturday
Moving Mountains, 8 a.m.

Bozeman Winter Farmers' Market
The Emerson Center for the Arts & Culture, Bozeman, 9 a.m.

Fly Fishing Film Tour
The Emerson Center for the Arts & Culture, Bozeman, 5 p.m.

WORTH THE DRIVE



Titled 'Swooning of Hero in the Church,' Alfred Elmore's 1846 depiction of pivotal scene from 'Much Ado About Nothing' underscores the timeless legacy of Shakespeare. WIKIPEDIA

“MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING”

The Ellen Theater, Bozeman

Saturday, Jan. 25, and Sunday, Jan. 26

Patrons of the theater in Big Sky might recognize more than just the title of “Much Ado About Nothing” as it pertains to The Ellen Theater’s upcoming rendition of William Shakespeare’s iconic play—this story will be directed by Mark Kuntz, the very same thespian that led and starred in last winter’s “A Streetcar Named Desire,” a Big Sky Community Theater production. Attendees of that performance will remember well the intensity, zeal and professional quality of that show, attributes that will no doubt transfer to one of Billy’s most celebrated comedies—thought to have been written at the turn of the 16th century, the middle of Shakespeare’s career. Set in the Sicilian city of Messina, the show is full of quirky, distinctly Shakespearean hijinks and drama found in all of his comedies and follows the story of a royal family and their political colleagues as they navigate a heaping twist of Renaissance-era gossip.

Visit theellentheater.com for more information and show times.

TEDxBigSky
Warren Miller Performing Arts Center, 5 p.m.

Live Music: Snobar, Round Two
Big Sky Resort, 6 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 29

Town Race Series
Big Sky Resort, 2:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, JAN. 30

Live Music: The Motet
The Rialto, Bozeman, 7 p.m.

Adult Pick Up Hockey
Big Sky Ice Rink, 7:30 p.m.

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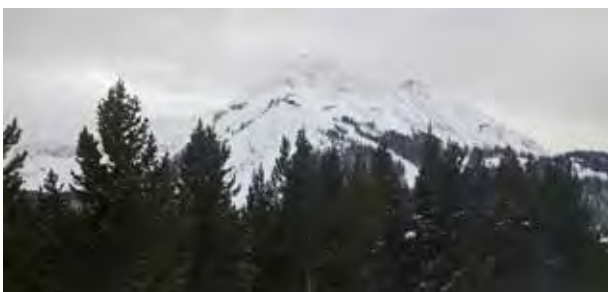
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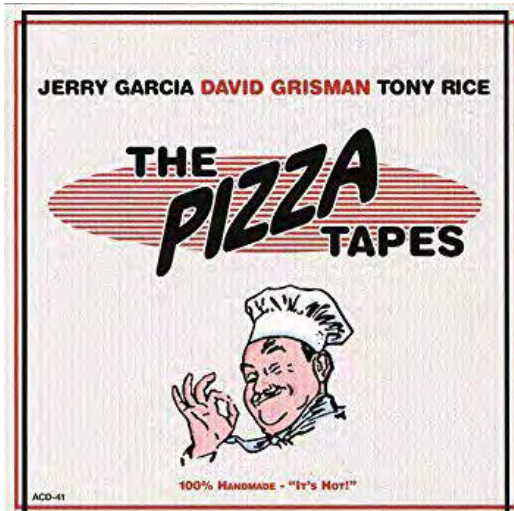
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Flatpicking with Zander Chovanes

How a Philly kid is mastering the art of bluegrass

BY MICHAEL SOMERBY



The cover art for "The Pizza Tapes," a bluegrass album by some of Chovanes' favorite artists that influenced his style profoundly. WIKIPEDIA

BIG SKY – When I first saw Zander Chovanes play guitar, his nail bed was bleeding, caking the tip of his pointer finger.

Chovanes had just finished the first half of a set with local mandolinist Ben Macht, a founder and fixture of Big Sky favorite Dammit Lauren and The Well, when I asked him at the bar how long he'd been playing.

Ten or 11 years—the figure, a mere decade, flies in the face of the 24-year-old Philly native's abilities.

If anything, his sound, his deft movements up and down the neck of his guitar, was that of a leather-faced back room regular.

With Chovanes on lead vocals, the duo had ripped through bluegrass, folk, blues and jam favorites from artists like Clapton and The Dead with remarkable fluidity and chemistry, and with a warm sound to boot.

So when I noticed his blood-covered finger wrapped around the neck of his beer and realized he hadn't until I pointed it out, I understood that when Chovanes plays the act transcends the physical.

The next time I saw him play was at the Outlaw Partners Christmas Stroll party, where his capacity for the acoustic was yet again on full display, only to see him a few hours later shredding an electric guitar, from his back, on the sticky wooden floor of the Broken Spoke.

Yep, Chovanes wasn't a one-and-done. I sat down with the young, promising artist to learn more about his journey as a musician.

M.S.: *What kick started your pursuit of music and playing guitar?*

Z.C.: I didn't come from a family where people played instruments, but I had a good friend growing up that was a really good piano player. When we were 13, he asked his parents for a drum set for Christmas and I asked my parents for an electric guitar. I ended up getting this Squier Stratocaster, the cheap Fender line, and an amp. And then we started a band with a bass player, playing through high school together.

M.S.: *Do you think starting out, immediately, in a band helped carry that passion?*

Z.C.: I can definitely attribute sticking with it to having someone to play with. The most important thing about playing music is playing with other people, no matter how good you are. That's what music's about—communicating with other musicians.

M.S.: *Describe your style for me.*

Z.C.: The older I get, the more I focus on putting my voice on the way I play guitar. There are so many great guitar players out there, even in this town, that can play faster and technically better than you, so it's all about finding what you do differently. I think what I'm trying to go for is like a rootsy, broad folk music sound that includes a bluegrass and Tedeschi Trucks Band kind of sound. But most people definitely think of me as a flatpicker.

M.S.: *Which other artists and influences do you draw inspiration from?*

Z.C.: "The Pizza Tapes" is one of the main albums that really got

me into bluegrass, with Tony Rice, Jerry Garcia and David Grisman. Definitely the Grateful Dead, too. But, to be honest, I'm really bad at discovering new music because once I'm introduced to something I kind of just latch onto it for a long, long time. For example, I recently went through the YouTube rabbit hole with Jason Isbell, and now I've made a personal connection. Derek Trucks is another big one, he has such a creative way of playing, and Luther Dickinson is another slide player I really like. On the bluegrass side, I really like Brian Sutton and obviously Tony Rice.

M.S.: *How has playing in the American West influenced your style?*

Z.C.: When I lived in South Carolina, I was around a lot more acoustic, folk and bluegrass music sounds, so I eventually got into flatpicking, the traditional bluegrass style of playing guitar. When I moved out here that really picked up steam because everyone plays that style in Montana. It's exposed me to an incredible living music scene, with many incredible flatpickers like Kevin Fabozzi and Tom Murphy.

M.S.: *What's it like playing in Big Sky?*

Z.C.: I feel very fortunate to be able to play here. There are a lot of great musicians, and tons of opportunity. I like the variety of venues, different avenues of expression—I can play late night at The Spoke and lay on my back and shred the electric guitar, or I can be Scissor-bills [Saloon]with Hanna [Powell] and do a rocking set, or me and Ben [Macht] can be at Spanish Peaks and play to that calmer vibe. And no matter what, even if you're not playing their favorite style, there will always be someone dancing.

Chovanes plays regularly around the Big Sky area with a number of local artists, including a newly minted bluegrass band, Fringe Bikini, with Chovanes on guitar, Powell on vocals, Macht on mandolin and Brian Stumpf on standup base.



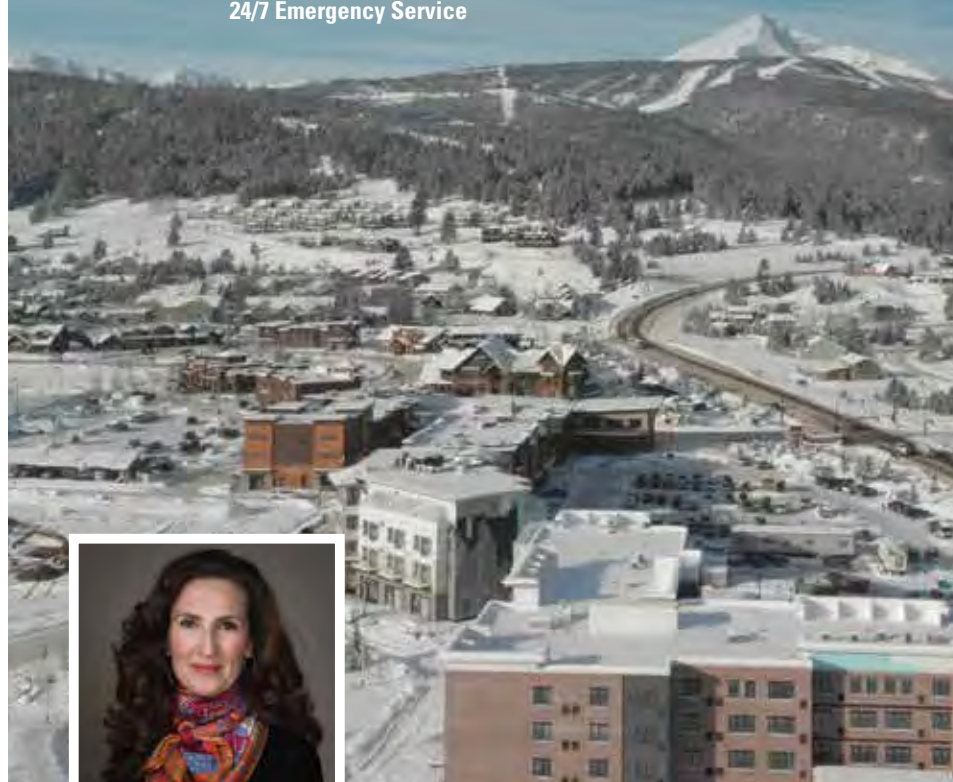
Chovanes opening for Dustbowl Revival last summer on the Town Center Stage. PHOTO COURTESY OF ZANDER CHOVANES



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BIG SKY BITES

Chicken and Pork Lettuce Cups

BY MICHAEL SOMERBY

In late December, The New York Times released, for me, one of their most impressive pieces of the calendar year. It regarded Chinese food.

You see, the torrent of copy relating to partisan discord, crumbling socio-political ties around the globe, Jeffrey Epstein, the ongoing impeachment and catastrophic, species-extirminating fires in Australia, among other charming subjects, rendered a malaise smoothie I became increasingly uninterested in drinking further.

Then, an article about the rapidly progressing rate of closing Chinese food restaurants, a nationwide phenomenon, broke the mold.

I'm not excited by the loss of Chinese food options in the U.S.—Chinese food was, is and forever will be a staple of my dining repertoire. What does encourage the psyche in this time of unease, however, are the reasons behind the shuttering doors and woks put out to pasture.

Chinese Americans, those that immigrated in the last 50 or so years and opened “Chinese food” restaurants, specifically, are climbing the rungs of American socioeconomics and no longer need to serve food to get by. In other words, the generations born in the U.S., in particular, are proving there is still yet hope for the American dream, shirking aprons and hot, steamy kitchens for college educations and higher-paying, white-collar jobs.

This is reason to celebrate. Of course, whether we were all aware or not, assimilation into American culture has been there from day one when it comes to Chinese food—you didn't actually think sesame chicken was a true blue dish from the Far East, did you?

In honor of those nights spent round a lazy Susan in your local dim sum joint, those moments using chopsticks to pluck the last pieces of moo shu pork from the bottom of a takeout carton, and all the notes and flavors Chinese food restaurants have brought to the U.S.—albeit in American-friendly packaging—I present a recipe for chicken and pork lettuce cups.

This was one the first dishes I learned in college to save a few bucks, and just like sesame chicken, the dish isn't actually truly Chinese or truly American. But it's delicious and that's 99 percent of what actually matters, anyway.

Recipe:

Prep Time: 10 minutes



PHOTO BY SAM BROOKS

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Servings: 4

Ingredients:

- 1/2 pound ground pork
- 1/2 pound ground chicken
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 clove garlic, minced
- 1 small white onion, diced
- 1/3 cup hoisin sauce
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon ginger, grated
- 3 tablespoons Sriracha sauce
- 2 green onions, sliced
- 1 Serrano chili, sliced (optional)
- 1 bunch cilantro, chopped (optional)
- 1 head butter lettuce

Instructions:

1. Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan over medium high heat
2. Add the pork and chicken, breaking into small bits and cooking 4-6 minutes until browned
3. Drain excess fat
4. Stir in onions, garlic, olive oil, hoisin sauce, soy sauce, rice vinegar, ginger and Sriracha
5. Cook until the onions become translucent
6. Stir in green onions and chili, cooking another 1-2 minutes
7. Remove from heat, salt and pepper to taste
8. Scoop into washed butter lettuce leaves, top with pinch of cilantro
9. Enjoy

AMUSE-BOUCHE

Amuse-bouche refers to an appetizer, and by French translation means, "to entertain the mouth." It offers a glimpse into what you should expect from a meal. Also it's free, compliments of the chef.

The ultimate team sport



BY SCOTT MECHURA
EBS FOOD COLUMNIST

With NFL playoffs fully underway, the perennial conversations about how much of a team sport football is are back as predicted. I get it. With 11 men on each side of the ball, all with a key role in the execution of each play, who could argue that the team isn't important?

But I have always maintained baseball is the truest team sport. Unlike football, the defense controls the ball. And unlike other sports where the same player can touch the ball again if they had initial success, it is the next team member who is up, regardless of home run or strike out. You literally have to rely on each and every team member in equal fashion.

Though if you want to see the ultimate team, you need to leave the sports arena altogether, and look at the modern restaurant.

The holiday season is the busiest couple of weeks of the year for the majority of businesses in Big Sky, certainly restaurants. We all start talking about it and planning for it on a regular basis as early as late summer. Well, at least I do.

It really hit me this year, right in the middle of service on New Year's Eve, what exactly it is that made and makes the holiday season such a success: it's the people. A restaurant in the throes of service can be a thing of beauty yet turn into a tire fire within a few agonizing moments. Believe me, I've seen my share of both.

11:00 – The day starts with the chef's and sous chefs' arrival anywhere between late morning and midday. We check on prep lists and have a quick chat with each other for an initial game plan. We start in on any projects we had planned with tenacity, knowing once the team arrives, our chances of distraction increase exponentially.

1:00 – The full kitchen team is in and both the hood fans and music go on simultaneously. Cooks jump into their prep lists with vigor. Make no mistake, no matter where they are, no matter what they're doing, they know exactly what time it is, because the countdown to doors opening begins when they walk in the back door.

4:00 – Bartenders and waitstaff arrive with a laundry list of opening duties: all small and all vital. This is when the building picks up energy and momentum. Both black and white uniforms buzzing about, trying to prevent the beehive of activity from turning into a hornet's nest.

4:50 – Pre-shift meeting begins. We go over any specials, any specific game plans or challenges for that particular evening and address any potential or previous night's issues and how to combat them. Everyone breaks and moves to their position of duty.

5:15 – First ticket comes in and the music goes off.

7:15 – The entire building is in high gear. Every single person, from owner, to maître d', to dishwasher is on the move. Everyone has a job that has a specific purpose to the whole. People moving about and passing each other with the deliberate purpose of a Tokyo crosswalk.

My head and body are spinning. I have dishes from cooks and voices from servers all coming at me from every angle. Despite this, I take pause and look around as I take it all in. It's as if I am in The Matrix, and time slows to a crawl. Everyone is doing their jobs and contributing to the whole. A hundred things are happening every minute and we are executing with confidence.

Yep, tonight was a thing of beauty. The beehive is producing honey. The hornets will have no nest on this night.

Scott Mechura has spent a life in the hospitality industry. He is a former certified beer judge and currently the executive chef at Buck's T-4 Lodge in Big Sky.



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