Explore^m

Life and land from the heart of the Yellowstone Region



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Top Stories of 2020

Of the hundreds of stories published by EBS, we pared it down to the essential themes that shined through—resiliency, uncertainty, unity, and most importantly, hope. Moving forward into the new year, EBS wants to convey the message of hope and encourage everyone to set their eyes on the bright horizon.



After months of waiting, the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine was administered to nurses at Big Sky Medical Center on Dec. 23. While the arrival of the new vaccine is exciting, we are not out of hot water yet, and Matt Kelley, Gallatin City-County Health Department health officer, urges everyone to continue following mandates and adhering to CDC guidelines.

Gallatin Canyon water and sewer district is formed

The Gallatin County Commission approved a petition to create a new water and sewer district in Big Sky. The approval came in a Dec. 29 meeting of the commission and it is a big step forward in the ongoing effort to solve Big Sky's wastewater treatment problems and protect the Gallatin River.



35

10

45

8

Big Sky Resort opens Hangman's to uphill travel in the mornings

If you are hankering to get some alpine touring in but don't want to venture into avalanche terrain, head to Big Sky Resort between 6 - 8 a.m. any morning of the week. The resort now allows uphill travel on Hangman's before the lifts start spinning creating a great opportunity for a morning burn, and a gorgeous Lone Mountain sunrise.

WMPAC brings the performing arts outdoors

"In a Landscape," a concert series led by award-winning concert pianist Hunter Noack, presents live, classical music in the outdoors. On Dec. 27 and 28, Noack played a 1912 Steinway piano, specially designed to withstand the elements, out in the middle of the driving range of the Big Sky Resort golf course.



Opening Shot

At the end of March, EBS's day-to-day reporting narrative was shaken up entirely when the novel COVID-19 virus struck the Big Sky community. Big Sky Resort, the epicenter of winter business in Big Sky, shut down operations with nearly a month still left in the season; small businesses closed without the promise of being able to reopen and human connection as we once knew it fizzled as the demand for strict social distancing took hold of households. This EBS cover, released on March 27, will forever be historic, as it marked the beginning of a long journey reporting on one of the area's greatest adversities. Months later, our Jan. 1 cover speaks to this image of looking down an unknown trail toward a pandemic reality. As we enter the New Year, we honor the path we've walked this year and seek a future of hope over fear.

ON THE COVER:

2020 was a year full of new challenges, spurring innovation and adaptation around the world. Looking forward, there is hope on the horizon with a new vaccine being implemented. Kelsey Dzintars designed this EBS cover to espouse that hope and focus on the path that lies in front of us all.

"The cover illustration I created for Explore Big Sky in March of 2020 symbolized the long, uncertain road we all had to walk in the face of the pandemic," Dzintars said. "The new year and beginnings of the COVID-19 vaccine distribution bring a new hope, a light at the end of the tunnel. I aimed to illustrate the feeling of this collective awakening with this image of a fresh, snow-blanketed dawn."

COVER ART BY KELSEY DZINTARS

Correction from EBS 262

The Making it in Big Sky column from EBS #262 has been edited for clarity and accuracy. Visit explorebigsky.com to read the most up-to-date version.

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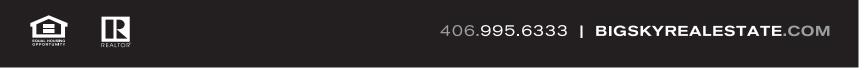
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What lesson did you learn in 2020?



Rachael Gionfriddo, Newport Beach, CA

"The biggest lesson I learned in 2020 is to never take spending time with friends for granted."



Morgan Boatner, Bozeman, MT

"The lesson I learned is to get comfortable being with yourself in your own little bubble and really get to know yourself."



David and Hunter House, Houston, TX

"Support your small businesses, if not, all we'll be left with is Chili's and Walmart." - David

"Times can always be worse." - Hunter

OP-ED:

Faith-based healing: past, present, future

America and Americans need healing. Our faith communities can help.

For centuries, our churches and faith communities were among the most important providers of physical healing and healthcare, first caring for the ill in monasteries and on battlefields, then building hospitals. We were there in times of crisis.

This year's elections are over. The pain that was inflicted and the need for healing across our great nation are still with us, however. Many of us are brokenhearted. We have lost valued relationships with family, friends and colleagues over political differences.

our land, waters, and sky is needed—a place where our faith groups are already helping. This is not the first time humans have caused serious damage to our ecosystem, though it is the most serious.

Acid rain from power plant emissions was destroying the forests in the eastern U.S. 30 years ago. Human release of certain chemicals, CFC's, caused the ozone hole over Antarctica 35 years ago. Ozone is critical for survival of all lifeforms on Earth. This problem could only be solved with worldwide support. Every nation in the United Nations eventually joined in ratifying the treaty to ban CFCs, leading to reduction of the hole.

But, as we look across our faith community's congregation, we do not see people who would destroy the economy, people who are fascists, communists or anarchists; we do not see people who hate others for who they are, even though we belong to more than one political party. We see a family of believers who love and support each other and who try to work together for the good of society. We have differing ideas of how to grow our economy and protect our country, but none of us are only right or only wrong.

Unlike the church, social media—so pervasive in this era of COVIDinduced isolation—allows us to interact without knowing the other person, making it easy to demonize the "other side." When we dehumanize, we often inflict damage that we would not consider if faceto-face. Luke 4:18 says, "He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted." Our faith communities can heal when we listen, we talk, we care.

Just as we are in crisis, so is the Earth. The climate has changed due to human actions and impacts from this shift are accelerating. A healing of

A Montana Chapter of Interfaith Power and Light formed in 2019. IPL "inspires and mobilizes people of faith and conscience to take bold and just action on climate change." They work with faith communities to become more energy efficient or install solar arrays, and to adopt measures on climate change through personal choices. Six congregations in Montana have installed solar in the past two years! Faith communities take their charge seriously: to "replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28). Like the Bible, the Qur'ān also describes mankind as being stewards of the earth.

Our bodies, our spirits, our minds and our earth are all temples. The sense of community we feel within our buildings of worship can extend beyond the walls. Let's work on healing our communities and the Earth together!

Dr. Robert and Lori Byron, Friends of Faith Hardin, Montana

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

The Importance of severing ties with the Chinese Communist Party

It seems that the lies and disinformation from the Chinese Communist Party keeps getting worse. With China concealing information about the coronavirus, the world has been caught unprepared and it is a threat to everyone on the planet. The CCP's suppression of people who tried to warn the world of its severity is well known. The brutality that China enforces on people who try to tell the truth and make their leaders accountable is also suppressed. People practicing their faith in China, including Christians, Falun Gong practitioners, Uyghurs, and Tibetans, are also suppressed through brainwashing, torture, and killing of innocent people, including the state-sanctioned forced organ harvesting for profit.

The U.S. has suffered from the loss of our manufacturing jobs and our intellectual property through the lying, deceit, and spying of the CCP. Communism is being infiltrated in so many aspects of our culture without our realizing it, and Americans are quickly losing their independence. To learn more about Communism: https://www.theepochtimes.com/c-how-the-specter-of-communism-is-ruling-our-world

If the world cuts its ties with China, it would not survive. It is time we awaken and distance ourselves from the CCP and stand up for human rights and truth.

The conflicts between right/left, liberal/conservative and Republican/Democrat have pitted families and friends against each other. Perhaps it is not Red versus Blue, but Communist values versus American Values. We have long enjoyed our freedoms, while the CCP has strategically indoctrinated the doctrines of communism into our lives. One does not have to dig very deep to find evidence of this.

The coronavirus has brought to light the horrid nature of the CCP. However, the true virus is actually the CCP. They are evil and we need to hold them accountable for their crimes against humanity.

Katherine Combes *Kalispell, Montana*

Big Sky Relief offers gratitude for local health professionals

As partners of Big Sky Relief organized to help our community weather COVID-19, the Big Sky Resort Area District, Yellowstone Club Community Foundation, Spanish Peaks Community Foundation, and Moonlight Community Foundation want to extend our gratitude to the entire southwest Montana health system, which has risen to address the historic challenge before them.

Because of the dedicated health professionals in our community, the rest of us have been able to continue working, learning, and staying as healthy as possible during the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Local businesses have been able to safely stay open and employees have been able to continue making a living because of our doctors, nurses, physician assistants, administrators, and all who have been on the front lines day-in and day-out risking their health on our behalf.

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our local county health officials, including Gallatin City-County Health Officer Matt Kelley and Madison County Health Officer Melissa Brummel. These two professionals have worked tirelessly to protect our community and we are grateful for their service.

These health professionals continue to log incredibly long hours under endlessly stressful demands. While the fight against this disease is far from over, we are confident in the leadership and service of our medical providers and health officials.

Big Sky Relief Ciara Wolfe Committee Chair of Big Sky Relief

2020: the year we won't soon forget

Given that I am now 62 years old, there is a bit of fog settling in my memory bank! I truly have a difficult time discerning one year from another. Oh, I vaguely remember 1968 for the riots, assassinations and for 20 of the top 50 Rock and Roll albums of the century being produced in that year. I guess 1977 was a good one. I graduated from high school, Frampton Comes Alive was my favorite album and the Cubs finished last in the NL East.

In 1982 I graduated from college and began my working life. I got married in '89 and had kids in '92, '94 and '97. 2002 was the first year our family came to Big Sky and '07 was the year I graduated from Wall Street. Yes, there have been good snow years and bad, bear and bull markets, smoky summers and clear ones, too. All in all, I can't say there really has been a bad year. They have all been pretty damn good. The year for 2020 will forever be one for the books. It was full of sweat pants, Zoom (did it actually become a verb?) and long days. Exercise went from a chore to a gift. We could revel in bluebird days and even Beyond meat chili tasted pretty good. It was a year of highs and lows. An outdoor lunch with your bubble friends to knowing the virus was out there randomly taking lives and exhausting front line workers. Have you ever seen such poignant evening news broadcasts? Perhaps the most difficult thing to see was all of the deaths and to make matters worse, all of the lonely deaths. To lose a loved one without properly being able to say goodbye is just fundamentally wrong.

We then move on to 2020—it started well: a good snow year and got really lucky cat skiing up in BC when we had epic powder! I attended a World Cup Biathlon event (a sport I have become passionate about). Great to experience it with 30,000 drunk, screaming German fans! I was even able to do a TEDxBigSky talk where I only forgot my lines once and am still hopeful I conveyed my point. Yep, it was all going pretty damn well, until ... I can remember that fateful night when the NBA postponed the season, Tom Hanks announced he had the coronavirus and Trump stayed on script for once and managed to scare the heck out of all of us.

The lifts stopped spinning, the beer stopped flowing and not a roll of toilet paper was to be found. We suddenly rediscovered crossword puzzles, voluminous books and gathering our kids around the dinner table (in our house, for the first non-holiday gathering since High School!). We came up with some new activities: Skinning, Farkle and baking scones. How do we build on this adversity? Do we value that family time a bit more? Have a look at those stunning Spanish Peaks and stop and relish the view? Perhaps it's stepping out of the crushing daily routine, redefining ourselves and yet meeting new demands? The one gift 2020 has given us is to reflect and not assume. We can examine what drives and motivates us. Hopefully we come out leading a bit more of a purposeful life, questioning what we don't believe in and acting on our principles.

None of us are going to forget 2020. It was a year ruled by outside forces well beyond our control, something we Americans bristle against. We have all been affected—forced us inside, lost jobs and perhaps have lost loved ones in such a difficult way. Dr. Fauci suggests we turn to science, let's look at Newton's laws of motion. For every action, there is an opposite and equal reaction. I would say that bodes well for us in 2021! Happy New Year—you got this Big Sky!

Bob Hall Big Sky, Montana



NEWS IN BRIEF



Gov. Bullock announces vaccination distribution plan

OFFICE OF GOV. STEVE BULLOCK

HELENA – Gov. Steve Bullock announced on Dec. 30 the state's COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan has been updated to incorporate the new federal recommendations for allocation to critical groups in Montana and an estimated timeline. This follows nearly 17,000 Montanans being vaccinated in first couple weeks.

The updated plan outlines an estimated timeline for vaccine distribution in Phases 1a, 1b, 1c and then the last phase (Phase 2) when vaccines are expected to be available to all Montanans late spring or early summer 2021. The estimated timeline covers December 2020 through July 2021 and lists which groups are recommended to receive the vaccine in each phase.

Currently, Montana has launched Phase 1a that targets frontline healthcare workers and staff and residents of long-term care facilities. With a total of 16,990 healthcare personnel in Montana having now received their first vaccination dose, this phase is now being expanded to include additional healthcare workers with direct patient contact, such as dentists, orthodontists, physical therapists, optometrists, home health workers and others that fit the criteria.

The final phase is expected to launch in late spring or early summer for all Montanans ages 16 and older.

Implementation of the plan is contingent on vaccine availability.

Lone Peak High School teacher receives STEM Research Grant

EBS STAFF

BIG SKY – Out of 427 applicants, 100 teachers were chosen as recipients of the STEM Research Grant, including Big Sky's own Dr. Kate Eisele, a biology teacher at Lone Peak High School.

The grant is from the Society for Science & the Public and it provides STEM research kits to middle and high school science educators from underserved communities to help students engage in scientific research outside of the classroom. The chosen recipients for 2020 hail from 38 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. They will each choose from a variety of kits and receive supplies equivalent to \$1,000.

Second COVID-19 relief bill signed into law

EBS STAFF

WASHINGTON, D.C. – President Donald Trump signed a \$2.3 trillion COVID-19 relief and government funding bill into law on March 27, staving off a government shutdown.

The COVID-19 relief package articulated in the bill, valued in total at \$900 billion, will extend unemployment benefits for certain pandemic unemployment programs, eviction bans and payroll assistance for small businesses. One part of the bill, though, may still be altered—the stimulus portion. Like the first COVID-19 relief package signed by Trump on March 27, stimulus checks will be sent to eligible adults, this time in the amount of \$600 with an additional \$600 per qualifying child under the age of 16—a significant cut from first stimulus' cap at \$1,200 and \$500 per child.

Upon receiving the bill, Trump contested the \$600 amount, asking that Congress raise the amount to \$2,000 and offer more money to the American people. On March 28, the U.S. House of Representatives approved a bill that would bump the stimulus up to \$2,000. As of EBS press time, the U.S. Senate had not yet made a decision on that bill.

Gallatin Rest Home residents, staff receive COVID-19 vaccine

GALLATIN MEDIA CENTER

BOZEMAN – On Tuesday, Dec. 29, 2020, the Gallatin Rest Home held a vaccination clinic for residents and staff who wished to receive their first COVID-19 vaccination.

There were 24 residents and 33 staff members who received their vaccinations. That represents 70 percent of all Gallatin Rest Home residents and approximately 50 percent of staff. The clinic was done through CVS staff from Helena, Missoula and Butte.

This year in particular, the STEM Research Grants program was adapted in order to provide teachers with the tools to support at-home learning.

Eisele chose three spiker boxes, four foldscope kits, six animal cameras and three water quality test kits.

"I tried to pick things that kids could take home and use on their own, and that we could either use in class, or they could use independently," Eisele said. "That's my motivation, it fit with curriculum things and it fit with something they could potentially use at home without a lot of help from me." Gallatin Rest Home Administrator Darcel Vaughn said that staff and residents are very excited about the possibilities the COVID-19 vaccine brings.

"This is a big step moving toward the reopening of the nursing home to visitors," Vaughn said. Resident Joyce Santos said getting the vaccine didn't hurt and she is doing well after receiving her dose.

"This is something that everyone should do to protect yourself and others," Santos said.

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First COVID-19 vaccines administered at Big Sky Medical Center Bozeman Health, county continue with COVID-19 vaccination initiatives

BY BELLA BUTLER AND MIRA BRODY

BIG SKY – On the top floor of the Bozeman Health Big Sky Medical Center in a closed off hallway, three nurses received the hospital's first doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

"We've just been waiting for this," said Kelly Reynolds, one of the first Medical Center nurses to receive the vaccine, which received emergency use authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Dec. 18. "Obviously this year has been horrible for everyone in our community. It's scary. And I think this is the first step to getting back to some normalcy."

Big Sky Medical Center was allotted 100 Moderna vaccine doses for the first round, enough to vaccinate the entire staff. Similar to the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, which was given FDA emergency use authorization on Dec. 11 and administered to staff at Bozeman Health Deaconess Hospital on Dec. 14, the Moderna vaccine requires two doses, spaced 28 days apart.

Ody Loomis is the first person in Big Sky to receive a dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER

"I didn't even feel it," one of the nurses said with a smile after receiving the long-anticipated shot.

"After employees receive the vaccine we ask them to stay for 15 minutes just so we can monitor any more immediate side effects," said Lauren Brendel, system director of marketing and communications for Bozeman Health and public information officer for the Bozeman Health Incident Command team.

Some potential side effects of the Moderna vaccine include fatigue, headache and nausea, among others, but some levels of side effects are expected. The Moderna vaccine has been described as being quite "reactogenic," meaning it can trigger an immune response that can sometimes be uncomfortable, or a sign that it's working.



The rest of the Medical Center staff will receive the first dose of the vaccine over the next few days, Brendel said. Bozeman Health Deaconess Hospital, Bozeman Health's flagship facility, received 800 doses of the Moderna vaccine today to inoculate the remaining healthcare workers in the Bozeman Health system who were not vaccinated with the previously distributed Pfizer vaccine, of which Bozeman Health received 975 doses.

On the same day that the first round of vaccines were administered at the Big Sky Medical Center, the Gallatin City-County Health Department unwrapped its own package of 300 Moderna COVID-19 vaccine doses. The Health Department is currently working with county health officials to distribute these doses to frontline healthcare workers outside of the Bozeman Health Network, including those working in smaller county clinics, long-term care facilities, and home health agencies as well as school nurses.

Gallatin City-County Health Department Health Officer Matt Kelley said in a Dec. 23 virtual press conference that they are distributing the vaccine with three primary goals in mind: safety, timeliness and transparency.

"Frankly, to see that vaccine come out of the box today, I don't think there was anyone in the room that didn't have goosebumps and there might have been a few tears here and there, or at least strong-willed people trying to hold back tears," Kelley said. "I think when you've gone through something like we've gone through—as a community, as a nation, as a world—to be able to see innovation and see those vaccines roll across the threshold is really pretty special."

A nurse prepares a dose of the new Moderna COVID-19 vaccine at the Big Sky Medical Center. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER

Kelley noted that although a vaccine is now available, the communities in Gallatin County still need to follow guidelines published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The best way to honor and thank those on the frontlines, he said, is to wear masks, wash your hands, keep your distance and stay home if you're sick.

On the Zoom screen, he motioned to a row of cards along his office window, notes of gratitude from the community for the Health Department's hard work during the pandemic.

"If people really want to honor the healthcare providers who are out there putting it all on the line, if they want to support public health, what we would really like them to do is to help us reduce transmission, because it's really making a difference."





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Gallatin County Commission approves formation of new water and sewer district

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY – The Gallatin County Commission voted unanimously to approve a petition for the formation of a new Gallatin Canyon water and sewer district at a Dec. 29 meeting.

The approval is in response to a petition filed by a cohort of four landowners, the Conoco, Mindy Cummings, Scott Altman and Lone Mountain Land Company, in the Gallatin Canyon area. The county received the petition on Oct. 29, it was certified by the county on Dec. 17, and approved mere days before the new year.

It was essential that the petition was approved before the new year, according to Altman, who spearheaded the petition effort. In order to receive funding for the new district from the Big Sky Resort Area District, the new district had to be formed by the end of 2020.

The idea to create a new water and sewer district has floated around for years, and the effort involved parties from several different corners.

In addition to Altman and the other landowners advocating the petition to the county, the effort was supported by Kristin Gardner, executive director of the Gallatin River Task Force; the Canyon Area Feasibility Study completed by the GRTF and prepared by WGM Group; Steve Johnson, the Secretary and Treasurer of the Big Sky Resort Area District Board; and Ron Edwards, general manager of the Big Sky County Water and Sewer District.

In 2016, the GRTF posted a collaborative watershed planning effort which articulated a main priority of addressing septic systems in the Gallatin Canyon. A committee was formed and decided that the first step to address the septic systems was the Canyon Area Feasibility Study, which analyzed the possibility of installing wastewater infrastructure in the canyon as well as proposed available options for execution.

The study was funded though resort tax and was completed in 2019. There were two main options considered according to Gardner: one was to have all wastewater treated centrally in the canyon and the second was to pipe the water up to the Big Sky County Water and Sewer District for treatment at their facility.

Since septic systems, which the canyon currently uses, do not treat wastewater to the same quality as central systems, according to Gardner, sewer infrastructure in the canyon area will be a big step forward in protecting the Gallatin River.

"Providing central sewer to the canyon will significantly reduce the nutrient loads to the river, which is a big issue for us because of recent algae blooms and we've seen some groundwater that's been steadily increasing in nutrients, which is also a public health threat," Gardner said.

Moving forward, the GRTF will remain involved in an advisory capacity with the new water and sewer district, mainly, to help in outreach efforts and writing grants.

In the meantime, the new water and sewer district has access to the funding promised by BSRAD.

In 2020 when the 1 percent for infrastructure was passed, the money was earmarked for two purposes, according to Johnson. The first purpose was to fund the upgrade to the Big Sky County Water and Sewer District wastewater treatment plant. The second specified use for the money, approved by Big Sky voters, was to put a new Canyon water and sewer district in place.

"The authorization of the funding was contingent upon the formation of this district," said Johnson. "That funding will now be made available for their use to put this into operation."

Altman. However, the new district can be proactive in the meantime.

"We'll have an engineer on board that will start looking at what is feasible for a first phase [as defined by the study], and what it would take to make that happen," Altman said. "Then we can go to funding sources and start to look at, what would phase one cost and where we can find the money to build the infrastructure, so that we can start bringing people on board and abandoning their old systems and hook into the new system."

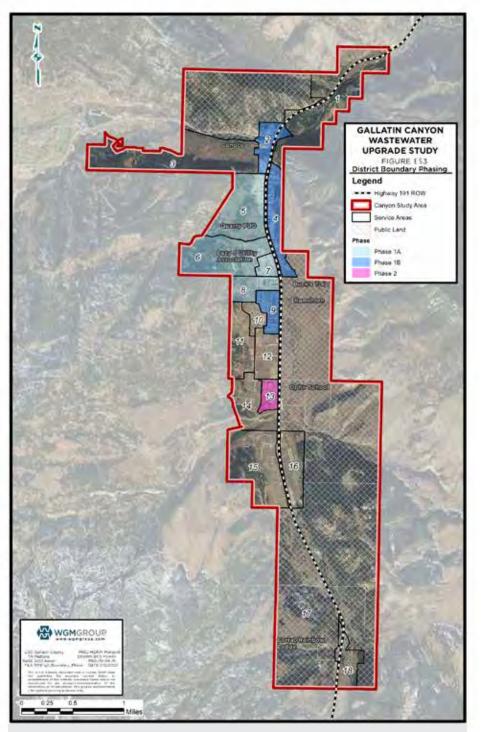
There is still a long way to go before the new infrastructure is in place, but Edwards with the Big Sky County Water and Sewer District was happy that there will be a new organization with the authority to help solve Big Sky's infrastructure issues.

"It's good news from my standpoint," Edwards said. "Having worked for a county water and sewer district that has done a lot of good infrastructure work for a long time, I know what they're capable of. I think one of the things we struggle with—being unincorporated—is who's going to take on these big infrastructure projects. If you're not a city or town, then a county water and sewer district makes the most sense."

The new Gallatin Canyon water and sewer district will have the authority to address some of Big Sky's wastewater treatment issues and to be good stewards of protecting the health of the Gallatin River.

As Gardner pointed out, the formation of the new water and sewer district is a proactive step spurred by concerns over the health of the Gallatin River; no one forced the creation of this new district.

"I think that's something that's unique and a positive step for the Big Sky community," she said. "This was a collaboration between a bunch of different entities, and most of the time, water and sewer districts are formed because people are forced to form them, and that was not the case. This was really about proactive watershed protection."



The first step, now that the county has approved the petition, is to be officially recognized by the Montana Secretary of State, according to Altman. He said they will be working with Eric Semerad of the Gallatin County Planning and Zoning Commission to get an official designation. Once that approval comes through, the new district can elect leadership and begin applying for grants as a public entity.

For now, the district remains small, including only the four landowners who signed the petition—this unanimous majority that made it easy for the county commission to approve the district. However, the district will welcome anyone in the resort tax area that wants to join. Eventually, the hope is to expand the new district south all the way down to include the Big Sky School District property.

"Moving forward we will have to get our board of directors together and start negotiating with Big Sky water and sewer for rates and such," Altman said. "Then, we'll go from there and decide how we can expand and how we can create service to people within the closest timeframe possible."

It is likely that new infrastructure for the canyon water and sewer district will not be put into place until after the upgrade to the current plant is finished, according to The Canyon Area Feasibility Study identified potential borders for the new district, as seen in the light and dark blue areas, called phase 1A and 1 B. The formation of a new sewer district is a key first step in reducing nutrient loading in the Gallatin River. MAP COURTESY OF WGM GROUP

Giving Tree gifts food, clothes, presents for local families Rotary Club of Big Sky's annual holiday program collects hundreds of donations

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY – The giving spirit is alive and well this year in Big Sky. The Giving Tree, a charitable opportunity sponsored by the Rotary Club of Big Sky, connected families with generous donors from throughout the community who provided gifts for dozens of local kids.

The Giving Tree is an annual program that helps families during Christmas by generating donations of gifts for the children and a Christmas dinner for a family in need. The Rotary Club of Big Sky, with the help of the Big Sky community, sponsored the Christmas Giving Tree with a few slight changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To participate, families picked up a Santa Letter from First Security Bank, American Bank, Big Sky Food Bank or The Country Market. After Dec. 1, when all the letters were due, angels were created that had specific requests from the letters on them. The Giving Tree was put up in the Big Sky Post Office Lobby a little earlier this year, during the week before Thanksgiving, to accommodate tighter deadlines. The angels were then hung on the tree throughout December for community members to pick up and purchase the requested gifts.

This year, just under 200 gifts were donated for the 45 kids from 27 families in the community. Each family will receive their requested gifts as well as any extra gifts donated, a stocking and each family will receive a box of food donated by Roxy's Market.

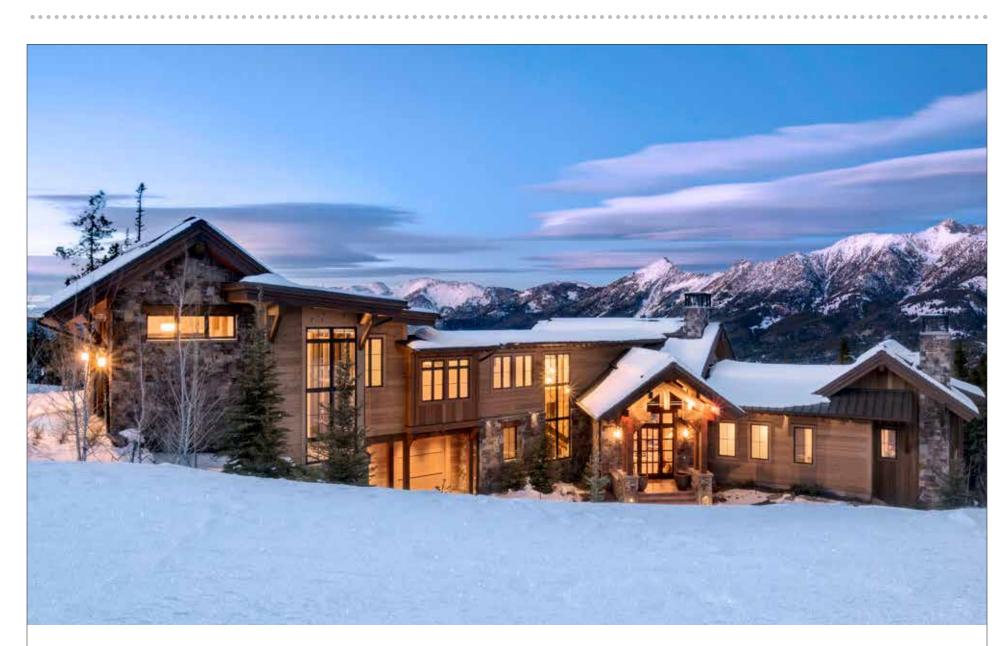
According to Mia Lennon, the coordinator of the program, they also received many cash donations from community members which were then used to buy extra items such as warm clothes to fulfill any outstanding needs of the children.



The Giving Tree is an annual program sponsored by the Big Sky Rotary Club which generates donations of gifts and food for local families in need. PHOTO BY MIA LENNON

decorating kit including pre-baked cookies from Sweet Buns Bakery, a new addition this year; presents for the children; Christmas stockings; and finally, wrapping paper to wrap the gifts since the volunteers will not be wrapping them this year as part of their COVID-19 precautions.

"We do want to really thank everybody that donated and bought gifts," Lennon said. "We couldn't have done it without so much support it's really incredible. It's just really fun and I'm excited too for little elves to see the kids' faces when we drop off the gifts on Wednesday."



Lennon works with a small team of volunteers to help her run the Giving Tree program.

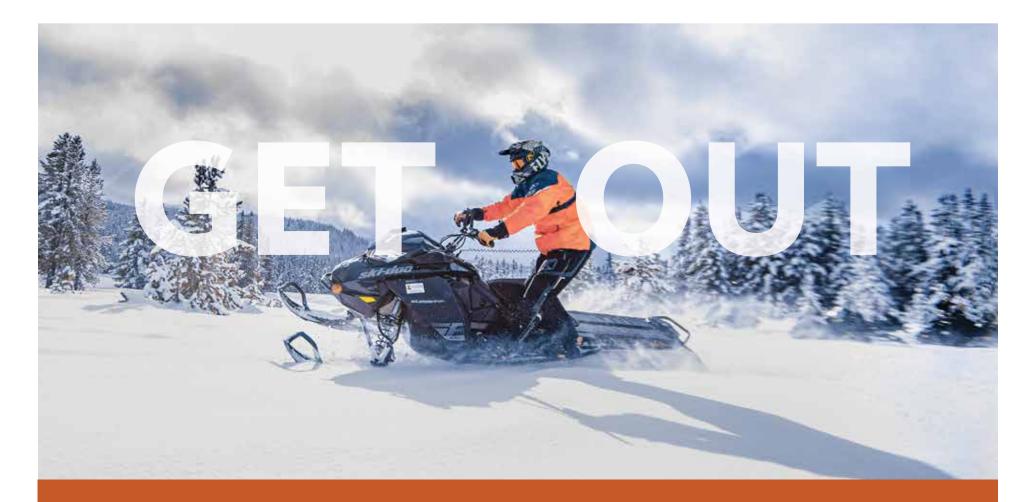
"Now we have a committee that can help me see the vision through," said Lennon. "I have three or four super awesome ladies that have been helping me, which has just made it so smooth."

The food donations will be picked up on Wednesday, Dec. 23, and distributed along with the gifts. Each family will receive a big Tupperware tub full of food; a gift card to help buy more food; a cookie-



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BEST BUSINESS

1st Ace Hardware 2nd Two Pines Properties

BEST GREEN ENTITY

1ST RECYCLING CENTER 2ND GALLATIN RIVER TASK FORCE 3RD YES COMPOST

BEST RESTAURANT

IST BLUE BUDDHA SUSHI 2ND GALLATIN RIVERHOUSE 3RD OLIVE B'S

BEST LOCAL MEAL DEAL,

1ST BLUE MOON BAKERY 2ND GALLATIN RIVERHOUSE 3RD MI PUEBLITO TACO BUS

BEST BURGER

IST BY WORD OF MOUTH 2ND COPPER-BIG SKY 3RD LONE PEAK BREWERY

BEST PIZZA

IST OUSEL AND SPUR 2ND BLUE MOON BAKERY 3RD PINKY G'S

BEST BAR

1ST BEEHIVE BASIN BREWERY 2ND THE ROCKS TASTING ROOM AND LIQUOR STORE 3RD THE BROTHEL

BEST APRES

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1ST SCISSORBILLS SALOON 2ND BEEHIVE BASIN BREWERY 3RD CARABINER

BEST COFFEE

IST CALIBER COFFEE 2ND ACRE CAFE 3RD THE HUNGRY MOOSE MARKET & DELI

BEST ARTIST

IST HEATHER RAPP

BEST PHOTOGRAPHER

1ST RYAN TURNER 2ND DAVE PECUNIES

BEST TOURIST ATTRACTION

1st Big Sky Resort 2nd Yellowstone National Park

BEST HOTEL

1ST THE WILSON

BEST RANCH

1st Lone Mountain Ranch 2nd 320 Guest Ranch

BEST SPA

IST SANTOSHA WELLNESS CENTER 2ND OZSSAGE

BEST SALON

1st Tribe Salon 2nd Hairninja Salon

BEST ANNUAL EVENT

1ST BIG SKY PBR 2ND MUSIC IN THE MOUNTAINS

BEST OUTDOOR RETAILER

1ST GRIZZLY OUTFITTERS 2ND GALLATIN ALPINE SPORTS 3RD EAST SLOPE OUTDOORS

BEST SHOPPING

1st Montana Supply 2nd Ace Hardware 3rd Sky Boutique

BEST FISHING OUTFITTER

IST GALLATIN RIVER GUIDES 2ND EAST SLOPE OUTDOORS

BEST REAL ESTATE COMPANY

IST BIG SKY REAL ESTATE COMPANY 2ND L&K REAL ESTAT 3RD BIG SKY SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY

BEST ARCHITECT

1ST CENTRE SKY ARCHITECTURE 2ND BECHTLE ARCHITECTS 3RD REID SMITH ARCHITECTS

BEST PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

1st Two Pines Property Management 2nd AlpineProperty Management 3rd Hammond Property Management 0

BEST INTERIOR DESIGN

1ST ERIKA AND COMPANY INTERIOR DESIGN 2ND ALDER AND TWEED 3RD TATOM DESIGNS

BEST LANDSCAPING 1st Big Sky Landscaping 2nd Wildwood Nursery

BEST BUILDER

IST BIG SKY BUILD 2ND BLUE RIBBON BUILDERS 3RD HAAS BUILDERS

BEST FINANCIAL INSTITUTION

1ST FIRST SECURITY BANK 2ND AMERICAN BANK

BEST NONPROFIT

1st Big Sky Community Organization 2nd Eagle Mount 3rd Big Sky Community Food Bank

COMMUNITY MEMBER OF THE YEAR

1ST GOV. STEVE BULLOCK 2ND JOSH TREASURE

2020 COVID MVP

1ST BIG SKY MEDICAL CENTER 2ND BIG SKY RELIEF 3RD BLUE MOON BAKERY

2ND SHELLY BERMONT





COMMUNITY MEMBER HEALTHCARE WORKERS

BEST NONPROFIT
WARREN MILLER PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

BEST BUSINESS BIG SKY NATURAL HEALTH

· · · ·

· KID OF Logan

BEST ANNUAL EVENT FARMERS MARKET

COVID MVP BRIAN STUMPF

KID OF THE YEAR Logan Barker Explore Big Sky

BASED ON 2020 BEST OF BIG SKY RESULTS

Big Sky Dough serving up doughnuts and goodwill overseas Proceeds support The Bakery Project, Ugandan women

BY MIRA BRODY

BIG SKY – What do Big Sky and Uganda have in common? Women-owned bakeries, thanks to Tessa Sharr, founder of The Bakery Project and owner of Big Sky Dough, the town's new doughnut shop. Inside the China Café in Town Center, owned by her parents, Sharr stands behind rows of homemade doughnuts—cinnamon sugar, vanilla sprinkle, chocolate, huckleberry and her personal favorite, brown butter glaze.

Big Sky Dough opened Friday, Dec. 18 and a portion of every sale goes to The Bakery Project, a nonprofit Sharr started in 2018 in Gulu, Uganda that allows women to learn the trade of baking and selling their baked goods. Although her visit to Uganda last May was cut short due to COVID-19, Sharr is still able to raise money for her nonprofit, and, with the help of The Bakery Project's on-site manager, Godfrey Lapolo, employ three bakers back in Uganda.

"Especially in Uganda, they're the ones running their households," Sharr said, explaining why her nonprofit focuses on empowering women. "They're the ones taking care of the kids, they find the firewood, they cook all the meals, are cleaning—they're just the backbone, I think, of society there, but there just has never been an opportunity for them to capitalize on it and I think that's why the bakery idea has worked so well there."

She says she noticed during her first visit that although women had the skillset to bake, men were traditionally the ones who did it professionally— The Bakery Project provides them the opportunity to equally capitalize on their skills.

Sharr grew up near Breckenridge, Colorado, attended college at Biola University in Orange County, California, then bounced around in the nonprofit industry for a bit, interning for Krochet Kids, a nonprofit that employees hundreds of people in Uganda and Peru to crochet quality, ethically-produced hats that are then sold, all with the goal of providing families with the tools to rise out of poverty.

During her time in Uganda, Sharr fell in love with the country's people and culture and she vowed to return and give back to the community that had inspired her. Her parents had moved to Big Sky from Colorado and she was baking at Caliber Coffee, where, with no formal background, she developed a love for it.

"I had this idea that we could teach women how to bake [in Uganda], and that would provide them an income first of all, because they'd be getting paid to bake, and then it would be like skill-based training, so they'd have a skill under their belt that if they wanted to branch out, they would have that opportunity as well," Sharr said.

She pitched the idea to some of her local mentors and they were immediately on board. The Bakery Project has a local board as well as trusted mentors she credits to her success, including Dawn and Diane Winston.





Here in Big Sky, Tessa Sharr continues to support her nonprofit from afar, donating a portion of the proceeds from each doughnut sale to The Bakery Project. PHOTO COURTESY OF TESSA SHARR

Due to the pandemic, the Uganda airport shut down and the European travel ban went into place, and Sharr suddenly found herself stateside looking for a project to keep her busy. That's when Big Sky Dough emerged. Her parents already had the space, so Sharr put together a business plan and worked The Bakery Project into it, and although she hopes to return to Uganda at some point, she can, for now, continue her passion from afar.

"The whole intention behind The Bakery Project was that I wanted it to be sustainable to locals, so I wanted them to be able to take ownership over it, and then it could be something where I wouldn't even be needed, I could just oversee it from the states," Sharr said. "So I think that was always the goal, and

The Bakery Project not only provides employment for Ugandan women, but also provides them with training and marketable skills. PHOTO COURTESY OF TESSA SHARR

COVID just pushed it more quickly."

Sharr says right now, under Lapolo's leadership, her Bakery Project women just finished 150 wedding cakes and are finishing up 25 Christmas cakes.

"It's been really cool to see," said Sharr. She says next, her and Lapolo would like to start a training curriculum to professionally train incoming women to bake, and further build their marketable skills. She says in Uganda, many girls graduate from secondary school and are unsure what to do next—The Bakery Project could soon be an option.

Meanwhile, Sharr will be at Big Sky Dough serving up Big Sky's only fresh doughnuts and coffee and spreading the word and raising money for her nonprofit with the help of the Big Sky community.

"The thing I love best about it is just the sense of community," she said of Big Sky. "We're all in this small town together and I feel like there's never been a sense of like, competition or whatever between small businesses. It's been like, 'how can we support each other.'That's my favorite part about it."

$OUTLAW_{M}$

News from our publisher, Outlaw Partners

AWAKENING

TEDxBigSky 2021 Speaker Lineup

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

Featured below is one out of a total of eight speakers slated for this year's TEDxBigSky. Check out tedxbigsky.com to read the rest of the bios.



BIG SKY – On Jan. 30, 2021, eight speakers will speak at the Warren Miller Performing Arts Center to articulate this year's theme of "Awakening."

This year, the 2021 Big Sky Ideas Festival will focus on the Awakening process that the country has gone through in 2020. As the world emerges from the lockdown, also emerging are the stories of lives changed, businesses pivoting, and incredible examples of humanity and community building.

Before virtually attending this year's event, EBS spoke with two of the speakers who will be presenting at TEDxBigSky 2021.

Blu is a devotee of life beyond the veil—a mystic, medicine woman, musician, artist and storyteller. Her curiosity of maximizing the human potential has taken her deep into the studies of The Gene Keys—a technology which has supported her to activate dormant parts of her own DNA while guiding others into their own genetic blueprint. She has been endorsed by Richard Rudd, the Founder of the Gene Keys in her teachings of this profound lineage.

Blu has also spent the past seven years as a student in the shamanic world—studying the Shipibo lineage in the Amazon jungle as well as being a devoted student and facilitator of The Earth Temple— at the Center of Prayer and School of Shamanic Arts. She is committed to learning the ways of the plant teachers and understanding how we can work together to heal some of our deepest wounds.

Blu is also the host of the Dejá Blu podcast, which has over 120,000 unique downloads worldwide, where she interviews some of the most brilliant minds on the planet today. Blu utilizes the art of storytelling to take people on a journey into their own consciousness and to activate media as medicine.

Explore Big Sky: What does the theme of awakening mean to you?

Blu: "I have geared my whole life around being awakened. Awakening means to me a shedding of any identity or story that is somebody else's, whether it's society, or a person that

has projected onto me to be the way that I live my life. Awakening is an opportunity for me to learn to actually trust my own intuition my own instincts and my own truth above the status quo of what society expects. Awakening means to me, a deeper listening to our Earth, the people on the Earth, and what is truly needed for us to actually thrive as a collective."

EBS: How did you become interested in the shamanic world and the Gene Keys?

Blu: "About four-and-a-half years ago, I was diagnosed with a hereditary hearing disorder, which I was shared, was progressive, hereditary and incurable meaning that essentially I'm going deaf. That took me into wanting to understand my own engineering of why this is even happening in the first place and what is it here to teach me. It took me on a journey of realizing that the way that we communicate is not necessarily through words, but there is a 70 percent mass below the surface of the water of the iceberg of nonverbal communication that most of us are not tapping into because we are distracted by our five senses. It's in that feeling, where actually truth is born ... It guided me in a place where I realized that my superpower is to feel what most people are not speaking into and being able to support others to transmute trauma, when they don't even realize they're in it. The shamanic realm put the right frame around what actually was my superpower."

EBS: Tell me about your work with the Gene Keys and how that has helped you to unlock your potential?

Blu: "I just so happened to have in my Gene Keys information—I had a deafness genetic. I actually looked deep into the deafness, which was essentially the shadow side of the genetic, and according to the Gene Keys, every shadow has a gift. By looking at the shadow and understanding it, what I learned from the Gene Keys was as a byproduct of me not actually listening to myself, not listening to my own needs constantly listening to other people, beyond actually what my own truth was, and I created a deafness were I actually physically faded out the sound of other people's truths over my own ... The Gene Keys helped me shift my narrative from it being a curse to it being a superpower."

EBS: What have you learned from unlocking your potential?

Blu: "I've realized that once I'm truly acting from a place of alignment with the reason why I feel like I came to this earth in the first place, then I can truly be of service from that place. What I've learned from putting the right frame around what was, I've now actually been able to be of service to support other people to put the right frame around their superpower that was once seen as a great challenge. My service has been unlocked, my ability to support and empower other individuals where they do not see potential, and to allow them to rewrite the narrative that this is happening for them, as opposed to happening to them."

EBS: What do you hope that attendees of TEDxBigSky will take away from your talk? **Blu:** "A shifted perspective of how our challenges in life hold within it the seed of a great promise and a great potential. It's up to us to be curious enough to look within to find the secrets and the goal that has always been within us. It's within every single person."

Big Sky PBR returns for 10th year Tickets on sale March 1

OUTLAW PARTNERS

BIG SKY - Outlaw Partners, event producers of Big Sky PBR and publisher of

The action doesn't stop there. Start practicing your putting game for the PBR Golf tournament at the Reserve at Moonlight Basin, an 8,000-yard Jack Nicklaus

this newspaper, is thrilled to announce that Big Sky's Biggest Week is back and is bigger than ever. We're celebrating 10 Years of Big Sky PBR this year so big bulls, big acts and big sound are heading to Big Sky.

After more than a year full of virtual events, Big Sky PBR, seven-time Event of the Year and part of the PBR's Touring Pro Division, will stomp into Town Center for a full week of action-packed events between July 16-24. The week kicks off on Friday, July 16 with the Big Sky Art Auction preview and Big Sky Community Rodeo.

On Saturday, July 17, auction bidders will gather in the basecamp tent located at the Plaza of The Wilson Hotel for the Big Sky Art Auction tent to bid on traditional and contemporary Western art, jewelry, and furniture. You will not want to miss this opportunity to bring home a piece for your mountain home.

The week continues into Tuesday, July 20 for a new day of activities, featuring a mutton bustin' pre-ride competition for the kiddos to hold on tight and compete for a spot in the big show—the PBR bull riding events Thursday, July 22 through Saturday, July 24. To round out the night, help support local nonprofits by participating in the new Bingo Night event under the basecamp tent.

Signature Design Golf Course with Majestic Mountain views, on Wednesday, July 23. The event will benefit Western Sports Foundation.

Each night before the bull riding, there will be a special meet and greet with a big name in bull riding. Then, head on over to the PBR events arena for the real action on the dirt to see the cowboys compete for eight seconds of glory, followed by live music.

Legendary singer-songwriter Robert Earl Keen will hit the SAV stage at the PBR Arena on Saturday, July 24 for what is sure to be an unforgettable evening of storytelling and music that have made the Houston, Texas native a renowned performer.

Jason Boland & The Stragglers, the gritty, honkytonk Texas Country/American Red Dirt band will warm up the stage on Friday, July 23 with their chart-topping hits and iconic country sound.

The remaining tickets for bull riding include access to the nightly music events and go on sale Monday, March 1 at 9 a.m. MST online only at bigskypbr.com. Limited music-only tickets will also be available online at bigskypbr.com beginning March 1.

So, save the dates, dust off your hats and shine up your boots. We'll see you there!

OUTLAW EVENTS

JOIN US FOR **BIG SKY'S BIGGEST WEEK!**

SUMMER 2021 LINEUP

FRIDAY, JULY 16

3-5pm - Big Sky Art Auction Preview / PBR Basecamp Tent in Town Center Plaza 6pm - Big Sky Community Rodeo / Big Sky Events Arena 9pm - Street Dance / Town Center Plaza

SATURDAY, JULY 17

4-7pm - Big Sky Art Auction / PBR Basecamp Tent in Town Center Plaza

SUNDAY, JULY 18

TBA - Mutton Bustin Pre-Ride Competition / Big Sky Events Arena 6pm - Big Sky Bingo Night / PBR Basecamp Tent in Town Center Plaza

WEDNESDAY, JULY 21

11am-5pm - Big Sky PBR / Western Sports Foundation Golf Tournament at Moonlight Basin **5pm - Farmers Market** 6pm - Golf Tourney Reception 7pm - Big Sky PBR Kickoff / PBR Basecamp Tent in Town Center Plaza 8pm - Live Music / PBR Basecamp Tent in Town Center Plaza

THURSDAY, JULY 22

12-6pm - Big Sky PBR Basecamp Vendor Village Open / Town Center Plaza 2pm - PBR Meet & Greet / PBR Basecamp Tent in Town Center Plaza 4pm - Live Music / PBR Basecamp Tent in Town Center Plaza 7pm - 10th Annual Big Sky PBR Night 1 Bull Riding / Big Sky Events Arena **TBA - Music in the Mountains Concert**

FRIDAY, JULY 23

12-6pm - Big Sky PBR Basecamp Vendor Village Open / Town Center Plaza 2pm - PBR Meet & Greet / PBR Basecamp Tent in Town Center Plaza 4pm - Live Music / PBR Basecamp Tent in Town Center Plaza 7pm - 10th Annual Big Sky PBR Night 2 Bull Riding / Big Sky Events Arena Following Bull Riding - Jason Boland & The Stragglers



SATURDAY, JULY 24

12-6pm - Big Sky PBR Basecamp Vendor Village Open / Town Center Plaza 2pm - PBR Meet & Greet / PBR Basecamp Tent in Town Center Plaza 4pm - Live Music / PBR Basecamp Tent in Town Center Plaza 7pm - 10th Annual Big Sky PBR Championship Night 3 Bull Riding / Big Sky Events Arena Following Bull Riding - Robert Earl Keen

LIMITED TICKETS ON SALE MARCH 1 - BIGSKYPBR.COM

*events and timing subject to change; stay tuned to bigskypbr.com for the most current events schedule

Explore Big Sky

MONTANA



Montana's mask mandate in doubt with incoming governor

BY MATT VOLZ KAISER HEALTH NEWS



Greg Gianforte, who was since elected as Montana's next governor, discusses his plans to loosen government-mandated pandemic regulation at a campaign stop in Helena. Gianforte recently signaled that when he takes office in January, he will lift Montana's mask mandate. PHOTO BY HAZEL CRAMER HELENA – Incoming Montana Gov. Greg Gianforte signaled he won't continue a statewide mask mandate in place since July, though he said he plans to wear a mask himself and get vaccinated against COVID-19.

If Gianforte, a Republican, reverses outgoing Democratic Gov. Steve Bullock's mask order, Montana will be just the second state after Mississippi to lift its mandate. Thirty-eight states now have statewide mandates.

"I trust Montanans with their health and the health of their loved ones," Gianforte said in a recent interview with Kaiser Health News. "The state has a role in clearly communicating the risks of who is most vulnerable, what the potential consequences are, but then I do trust Montanans to make the right decisions for themselves and their family."

The Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention says masks help prevent transmission of COVID-19. At least one study has found that states with mask requirements have had slower COVID growth rates compared with those without mandates.

"We're going to encourage people to wear masks," Gianforte said. "I'm personally going to lead by example, wearing a mask in the Capitol."

Montana is the only state where control of the governor's office is changing parties as a result of November's election. Also, among the 11 governors being sworn in this January, Gianforte will be the only one new to managing his state's response to the pandemic.

Nine of the others are incumbents starting second terms. The 10th, Spencer Cox, is Utah's lieutenant governor in the current administration and has played a central role in his state's COVID response.

Montana alone will have wholly new leadership next year as states try to keep hospitals from overflowing amid the surging virus, while adjusting to a new presidential administration and executing vaccine distribution plans.

Gianforte doesn't plan to scrap everything the outgoing administration has done to

Gianforte will be the first Republican in the governor's office in 16 years. Republican lawmakers, who control the Montana Legislature, cheered Gianforte's election and have high expectations for the session that begins the day of his inauguration.

Republican lawmakers will likely seek budget cuts after unsuccessfully asking Bullock to preemptively cut state spending during the pandemic. Bullock has said the state is in good financial shape and that any decision to cut spending would be made for ideological reasons, not out of necessity.

Gianforte has declined to indicate whether he plans to support spending cuts, saying his incoming team is still reviewing Bullock's proposed two-year budget. That budget proposal includes spending increases to Medicaid, support for children and families, senior and long-term care and treatment for addiction and mental disorders.

John Doran, vice president of external affairs for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana, said he hopes lawmakers spare health services used by at-risk residents if they plan to reduce spending to balance the budget.

"These are critical services and the need for them has only increased since the start of the pandemic," Doran said.

The structure of Montana's Medicaid expansion program could emerge as one of the more contentious health issues this session. The federal and state health insurance program for people with low incomes or disabilities extended eligibility to Montana adults who make 138% of the federal poverty level in 2015, and it now enrolls more than 90,000 low-income adults.

At least a half-dozen bill requests have been made by Republican lawmakers ahead of the session to revise the Medicaid expansion program, alarming some health care industry officials. Rich Rasmussen, president and CEO of the Montana Hospital Association, said Medicaid expansion has helped small, rural hospitals maintain financial stability, particularly during the COVID crisis.

"We will adamantly oppose any effort to dismantle the program," Rasmussen said. "We will share with lawmakers how devastating it will be to employers."

Gianforte said he supports continuing Medicaid expansion but would be willing to revise the program to increase safeguards against fraud. There hasn't been evidence of widespread fraud in the state's Medicaid expansion program.

"If we let people sign up for it who are not qualified, the benefits may not be there for the people who really need it," he said. "So I am open to additional accountability components."

Gianforte also is expected to be drawn into a legislative debate about changing or limiting the powers of county public health officials. Local conservative leaders and business owners complain that many health officials have overstepped their authority during the pandemic, while at least seven local health leaders have left their positions amid complaints about a lack of support by some county leaders and law enforcement officials in enforcing directives.

fight the pandemic. For example, he said he and Bullock are "on the same page" when it comes to prioritizing distribution of the vaccine to health care workers and vulnerable residents.

Gianforte also said he plans to take the vaccine when it's his turn.

"When my name comes up on the list, I will raise my hand and I am going to get vaccinated," Gianforte said. "It's very important that I lead by example because I think this vaccine is a critical part of us getting back to normal."

Gianforte, a businessman who sold his software company, RightNow Technologies, to Oracle for \$1.8 billion in 2011, has long coveted Montana's governor's office, spending nearly \$12 million of his personal fortune over four years and two campaigns to win the seat.

He ran against Bullock and lost in 2016, then won Montana's congressional seat in a 2017 special election infamous for Gianforte's misdemeanor assault against a reporter trying to ask him questions.

Gianforte won a second term in Congress in 2018 and defeated Bullock's lieutenant governor, Mike Cooney, by more than 12 percentage points in November's election.

Republican Rep. David Bedey is proposing a measure that would require county commissioners to ratify any decisions made by a local public health officer or panel. He said his proposal isn't meant to take power away from public health officials, but rather to shift the accountability of such decisions to elected officials.

"I do not wish to punish public health officials," Bedey said. I think they need political cover to do their jobs."

Bedey's proposal is one of a handful of bill requests seeking changes in the powers of local health officials. Some health industry officials and lobbyists worry about any infringement on the ability to respond to a public health emergency.

"Local governments are best equipped to make decisions about the health of their communities," said Amanda Cahill, the Montana government relations director for the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association. "Public health safeguards are more important than ever, and we hope that the ability of local decision-makers to take protective action remains intact."

KHN (Kaiser Health News) is a nonprofit news service covering health issues. It is an editorially independent program of KFF (Kaiser Family Foundation), which is not affiliated with Kaiser Permanente.

Big Sky Resort opens Hangman's to uphill travel

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY - The thermometer reads negative six degrees at 6:30 a.m. on a clear morning in Big Sky. I stand by my car and stuff my unwilling toes into ski boots alongside my coworker and adventure pal, Mira Brody. Though we are wondering what madness prodded us from our warm beds this morning, soon we will witness Lone Mountain cloaked in the glow of a Big Sky sunrise as we ascend the untouched corduroy, and the cold, early morning will be more than worth it.

In years past, Big Sky Resort has allowed uphill travel on Andesite only while the lifts were spinning. This year the resort is switching it up.

For the first time ever, the resort has begun allowing uphill travel, or alpine touring, in the morning, from 6-8 a.m., before the lifts begin running at 9 a.m.

"An early morning uphill route made perfect sense this season as folks are seeking more socially distant outdoor activity," said Troy Nedved, General Manager of Big Sky Resort. "So far, the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and we plan to continue this option in future seasons."

This policy change offers a new way to get your heartrate up before heading back inside to work for the day. Though on the particular morning we chose to exercise our new uphill travel privilege, type-two fun may have been a more apt descriptor.

After getting geared up in the parking lot at the resort, we head over to the base. A quick interlude at Vista Hall provides my touring companion the chance to pour some boiling water over her frozen bindings in order to thaw them for use.

We start by the bottom of Ramcharger lift on Andesite Mountain and head up the cat track. Around us, lift operators set up the lift line mazes, and ski patrollers whiz by in red coats.

As we continue, the bustle fades, and we experience a moment of peace under the pre-dawn indigo sky. My eyelashes and Mira's hair freeze bestowing on us an ethereal aura.



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Hangman's, a blue ski run at Big Sky Resort, is now open for uphill travel in the mornings from 6 – 8 a.m. conditions permitting. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER

We gain elevation along with the sun and are able to glimpse some stunning Alpenglow-infused views. The freshly groomed corduroy provides some great traction for our frozen skins.

After stopping to take many photos and make minor gear adjustments, we call it quits halfway up. We are tired, cold, and most importantly, Big Sky Resort asks that all uphill travelers turn around at 8 a.m.

We transition from uphill to downhill mode roughly halfway up the run, and of course, try to capture the stunning sunrise.

The ski down is short but glorious. It is rare to have the opportunity to claim a freshly groomed run entirely to yourself.

In the future, it may be prudent to check the

thermometer and plan accordingly. The mercury may have slightly misled us that morning, but the views and the turns were unparalleled.

Uphill access on Hangman's ski run officially opened on Dec. 24, 2020 and it is free with a valid Big Sky Resort season pass or ticket media. Otherwise, skiers must purchase an uphill access-only Sky Card for \$5.

The resort strongly recommends that guests bring a headlamp since, once you leave the base area, the trail is unlit. The only route available for uphill travel is Hangman's on Andesite Mountain. This trail was chosen since it is regularly groomed, slightly less steep than Ambush, more fun than Pacifier, and, most importantly, it keeps guests out of avalanche terrain.

"Opening Hangman's to uphill travel in the mornings fills a gap for those looking to get some skinning in without heading into the backcountry," Stacie Mesuda, Public Relations Manager at Big Sky Resort wrote in an email to EBS. "After a quick hour of uphill travel, watching the morning alpenglow unfold on Lone Peak is breathtaking."

The experience is breathtaking indeed, in more ways than one, and it is a great start to any day. After we wheeze our way back to the car, Mira and I agree that the morning was a great one, but next time, we will wait for some warmer temps.



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THE NEW WEST



BY TODD WILKINSON

If *annus horribilis*—the year otherwise known as 2020—has taught us anything, it is that modern Americans, in ways unprecedented, have received a mass crash course in the vagaries of contagious disease epidemiology.

And, if there is one singular take-home message, it's that when a deadly pathogen is spreading, it's incredibly unwise for host species

to be bunched up, for that is an important factor in determining whether virulence of disease speeds up or slows down.

This is not a truism of maladies affecting just humans; it is a gospel for most kinds of disease control, including diseases classified as epizootic diseases, i.e. those that can spillover from animal species to human, and vice versa.

In early December, loud concern was voiced when it was confirmed that a cow elk in Grand Teton National Park, near the invisible boundary of the National Elk Refuge, had tested positive for Chronic Wasting Disease.

CWD, as it is known, is a cousin of Mad Cow Disease, the prion disease that spread from cattle in the United Kingdom to humans. CWD afflicts cervids, members of the deer family that in the Lower 48 includes elk, moose and most prolifically, deer. In the Arctic, it also sickens reindeer/caribou.

While no cases of CWD being transmitted to people who eat contaminated game meat have ever happened, that doesn't mean it won't happen, disease experts say. And even if that doesn't occur, CWD is still a dreaded plague, for it is always fatal in deer species. There is no cure or vaccine.

CWD has been rapidly spreading through wild deer and elk populations in the West and only a few years ago it reached herds in Montana, coming from Wyoming, the Dakotas and the Canadian Prairie Provinces where it is now endemic.

South of us in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem you will find the largest complex of artificial feedlots for wild elk in the world. Between the federal Elk Refuge and 22 feedgrounds operated by the state of Wyoming, more than 20,000 are given alfalfa pellets or hay during the winter.

The net effect is that thousands of wapiti bunch up around those rations. Outfitters and guides support feeding because it results in more elk staying alive during the winter and more elk means better hunting opportunity

CWD hits elk in Jackson Hole, raises important questions

the worst possible wildlife management practice in the face of an advancing ultra-lethal pathogen.

In some ways, it's kind of akin to filling the pews of mega-churches with devotees who remain there for four months without wearing masks, with known COVID-19 carriers in their midst.

In response to the CWD-positive elk, neither the Elk Refuge nor Wyoming Game and Fish say they have any plans of markedly altering their hayfeeding regimens this winter. Instead they will engage in monitoring and surveillance, testing animals that appear to be ill, or are struck by cars and adding to a database of thousands of samples collected from hunters who turned in heads of elk and deer for analysis.

This is what most of the two dozen states where CWD occurs normally do to help determine if it is spreading, but no other state where CWD is present clusters 20,000 animals together around feedgrounds; hence, that's why experts like Roffe and others fear CWD could take hold in ways much deeper than normal and be carried more widely around the ecosystem when wapiti migrate to summer ranges in the spring.

Also frightening is that many CWD carriers are initially asymptomatic and, once infected, may not die for a couple of years. The infectious agents, prions, are shed into the environment via saliva, feces, urine and bodily tissues that stay in soils and can cause infection for several years.

As the widely respected veterinarian Dr. Roffe says, we are now in uncharted territory. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that all game animals in CWD-endemic areas get their meat tested and never to eat animals that are CWD-positive. If CWD proliferates, it will bring a lot more tough questions relating to spread, environmental contamination and possible risks for humans, other mammals and livestock that currently are unaffected.

Among all of the big issues likely to shape the future of Greater Yellowstone, the richest and most regional for large wild megafauna in America, this will be one issue to watch closely. And, as always, the most important thing necessary for public discussions going forward will be arming ourselves with the best scientific facts—not mere hearsay or windshield biology.

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

for clients. Ranchers also favor feedgrounds because it keeps elk away from their private pastures where they are feeding cattle.



But many prominent experts in areas of wildlife management and epidemiology say that feedgrounds, with CWD now present, are setting the famous public elk herds of Greater Yellowstone up for disaster.

While CWD normally moves slowly and devastatingly through herds over time, feedgrounds are likely to accelerate the spread of disease, says Dr. Thomas Roffe, the now-retired former chief of animal health for all of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which operates the Elk Refuge. Roffe is an expert on CWD and for decades he and others warned that feedgrounds are

More than 7,000 wild elk bunch up around artificial feed during winter at the National Elk Refuge in Jackson Hole. Could it hasten a super-spreader event for the deadly and much-feared pathogen Chronic Wasting Disease? PHOTO COURTESY OF THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



BY DAVID TUCKER

It is, once again, that time of year. It is time to make—and hopefully keep—our New Year's Resolutions.

For those of us who spend time in the Gallatin River Watershed, keeping the river clean and cold is as good a resolution as any, and there are so many ways you can be successful.

For starters, commit to water conservation in your home. Take advantage of the Big Sky Water Conservation program to upgrade your water-using appliances to more efficient models. The Gallatin River Task Force will pay you to replace your showerheads, clothes washers and toilets, plus you will save hundreds of dollars on your annual water bills.

Now that the Big Sky Water and Sewer District has moved to a tiered-rate model for ratepayers, water savings at home will lead to big savings in the bank. The Big Sky Water Conservation program also has outdoor options, and landscaping in the summer accounts for seven times more water use than in the winter.

When we commit to using less water in our homes, we are keeping our groundwater resources full. While it is true that we do not pipe water from the Gallatin River into our homes to cook and clean with, we do pump water destined for the Gallatin up out of the ground and into our faucets. Whether we are connected to the Water and Sewer District or on individual wells, we withdraw water that is bound for the river and use it in our homes. Some makes it back and bolsters the in-stream flow of the Gallatin, but some does not.

Lower flows lead to warmer water temps, which can have adverse effects on aquatic wildlife like fish and their main food source, macroinvertebrates like mayflies, stoneflies and caddisflies. The next time you are running a half-empty dishwasher, keep in mind that if you plan to match the hatch come summer, the flies will need that water too. Upgrade your appliances, conserve water when possible and keep the Gallatin blue-ribbon.

Once your appliances are upgraded, consider converting your grass lawn into a trout-friendly landscape, restoring native flora that attract native fauna. These shrubs, wildflowers and native grasses require much less watering once they are established, making this another way to keep your water-saving resolution.

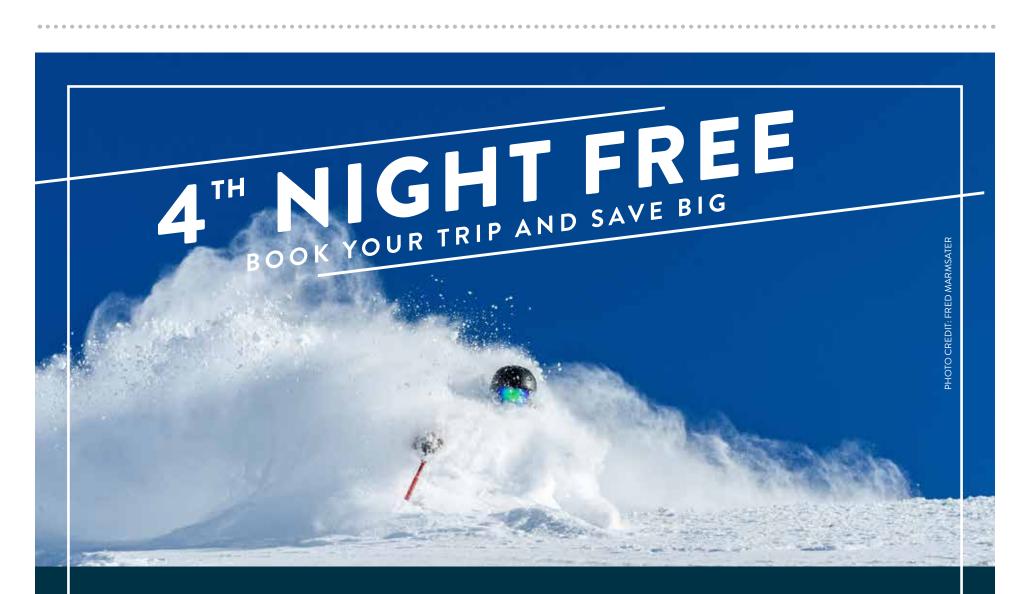
Native plants are drought-tolerant and well adapted to our semi-arid climate, plus they do not require fertilizers that contain harmful nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorous. When we use these fertilizers on our lawns and then irrigate, they are transported to nearby creeks and streams, degrading water quality.

If you are lucky enough to live along a creek or own a business adjacent to a stream, consider restoring and enhancing the riparian habitat on your property. Wetlands store water naturally, releasing it slowly throughout the spring and summer so that there are ample in-stream flows later in the season and early in the fall. This keeps fish happy and healthy, keeping our recreation economy sustainable and resilient.

Now that you have committed to conservation in your home and restoration on your property, consider endorsing the Montana Headwaters Legacy Act Wild and Scenic Rivers legislation that was recently introduced by Sen. Jon Tester. The bill includes 39 miles of the Gallatin and 18 miles of the Taylor Fork, along with other iconic waterways in Montana, setting a standard for river protection and resource conservation. The MHLA enjoys broad support across our great state, and a recent University of Montana poll shows 80 percent of residents are in favor of more Wild and Scenic rivers in Montana.

As you can see, there are many ways you can resolve to protect and conserve the Gallatin. Do it because you enjoy fly fishing. Do it because you enjoy whitewater rafting. Do it because the Gallatin sustains us and enables us to live in this special place. Whatever your reason, you can feel good knowing you are doing your part to guarantee a clean, cold Gallatin for future generations.

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



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A lesson in snow science: Persistent weak layers

BY BELLA BUTLER

MONTANA – For those opting to forgo the ticket reservation systems and limited pass availability of southwest Montana's ski resorts stricken by pandemic reality, traveling through the backcountry may be the preferable option. Recreation in uncontrolled terrain, however, comes with its own set of risks.

In order to follow one of the most emphasized axioms of the backcountry world, "Know Before You Go," having the proper avalanche education, including a literacy in avalanche forecasts, is essential to understanding and weighing risk when moving through the backcountry.

"It's really important to read the forecast because the snowpack stability changes rapidly," said Doug Chabot, director of the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center. "It can change day to day based on snowfall, wind, the sun, temperatures. It's really hard to keep track of all that so we keep track of it for you."

A common evil that can make a snowpack questionable throughout the entire season is the ever-dreaded persistent weak layer. This is a component of the snowpack that is often discussed in avalanche forecasting and is a warning that should be seriously heeded.

A safe snowpack for backcountry users is a stable snowpack, or one in which the layers have bonded together to create a cohesive solid snowpack. A weak layer is a layer of snow in the snowpack that can easily collapse and potentially set off a snow slide. A persistent weak layer, Chabot says, is exactly what it sounds like: a weak layer that persists to exist, sometimes throughout the whole season. This layer will continuously fail to heal or properly bond with other layers in the snowpack. Weak layers are most often caused by persistent and stagnant snow grain types, like facets, surface hoar and depth hoar.

Facets form in a snowpack when there is a large temperature gradient, or a large change in temperature throughout the snowpack. Facets, which feel like sugar in your



In Beehive Basin, a fractured slab of snow reveals where an avalanche slid, exposing a weak layer. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GALLATIN NATIONAL FOREST AVALANCHE CENTER

hands, are the formidable counterpart to rounded snow crystals, which bond well and create a stable snowpack.

Surface hoar are the beautiful feather-like ice crystals that show up on the surface of the snow, or sometimes even on your windshield. These dangerously fragile crystals form in cold, clear conditions. When buried, hoar can form a weak layer that is hard to detect.

Depth hoar, another threatening grain, forms near the base of the snowpack, when the combination of the warm ground and cold clear conditions at the surface creates a high temperature gradient.

Since November, the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center has been reporting a persistent weak layer that Chabot says formed from early snow in October that sat unburied and exposed to cold temperatures for enough time to create a layer of facets.

"We will be talking about this weak layer for months. It does not go away quickly, and it's going to be a problem for a lot of the winter," Chabot told EBS on Dec. 28. With a slow start to the season, Chabot suspects riders, snowmobilers and skiers will be eager to get into the backcountry as soon as a big storm rolls through and deposits an enticing layer of powder. But stoke should be paired with caution, as the persistent weak layer will be further buried but still dangerous.

To armor yourself against this layer, Chabot recommends a few things: read the forecast, always bring a partner and rescue gear (that you both know how to use) and stay attuned to signs of instability like breaking snow and "whoomfing" noises while traveling.

For more information on local avalanche safety and to access the avalanche forecast, visit mtavalanche.com.

This article sourced information from a snow science curriculum created by Andrew E. Slaughter from Montana State University and former Big Sky School District teacher Dave Neal.

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When water dries up, it can be deadly

BY PEPPER TRAIL WRITERS ON THE RANGE



In Oregon, the Klamath Basin wildlife refuges have fallen into their winter silence now. The huge, clamorous flocks of geese that fill the sky during migration have moved south.

This summer, a different silence gripped the Basin—a dead silence. The 90,000 acres of marshes and open water that make up the Lower Klamath and Tule Lake national wildlife refuges are a small remnant of vast wetlands that once filled this region

on the Oregon-California border.

With over 75 percent of those wetlands now converted to agriculture, the refuges are a last precious oasis for nesting waterfowl and other marsh birds. For this oasis to burst with life, it simply needs water. Sadly, nothing is simple about water in the Klamath Basin. And this summer, that led to tragedy.

All the water in the Klamath Basin is promised to somebody—and almost every year, far more is promised than is available. The "protected" wetlands of the national wildlife refuges come last on the list and are chronically starved of water. In 2020, the situation was so critical that the Bureau of Reclamation, which controls the water, released three emergency allocations to the refuges, totaling 14,000 acre-feet. It was not enough, and compared to the 147,000 acre-feet received by irrigators, barely a drop in the bucket.

The resulting stagnant pools were perfect breeding grounds for bacteria that produce a botulism toxin deadly to birds (but harmless to humans). The toxin is taken up by aquatic invertebrates that filter-feed on the bacteria, and then reaches fatal concentrations in waterfowl and other birds that eat the invertebrates. Afflicted birds lose muscle control. Unable to hold up their heads, poisoned ducks often drown in the water that should have given them life.

The Klamath refuges regularly suffer outbreaks of avian botulism in late summer, when the water is lowest. In a "normal" year, a few hundred birds might be brought in for treatment.

This summer, the outbreak was a conflagration. More than 3,000 poisoned birds were treated by the rehabilitation organization Bird Ally X. They were the lucky ones.

Among rescued birds that survived the first 24 hours, over 80 percent could be released, a testimony to the tireless work of volunteers, the support of conservation organizations and the expertise of Bird Ally X staff.

But most poisoned birds never made it to treatment. Field surveyors at the refuge gathered the bodies of about 20,000 dead birds, a number equivalent to the population of Klamath Falls, the region's largest city. The California Waterfowl Association estimates that at least three times that many died-at least 60,000 dead birds. These were dead Mallards, with their emerald-green heads; dead Northern Shovelers, with their comically enormous bills; dead Northern Pintails, long-necked, long-tailed, and elegant.

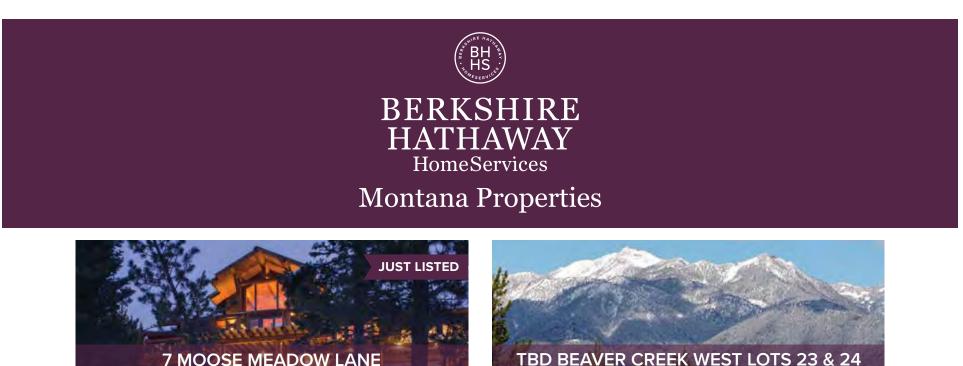
A host of seemingly legitimate claims on the Klamath Basin's water exist: farmers whose roots in the region go back generations, tribes whose ties to endangered Klamath River salmon and Klamath Lake suckers stretch to time immemorial.

But older than any human claim, any human "right," are the rights of the wild. How easily we forget that water is wild. We claim it, we fight over it, but we did not make it. The water of the Klamath Basin created a world of overflowing abundance, of lakes filled with suckers, a great river bursting with salmon, and also of marshlands filled with ducks and grebes and ibis and egrets. Our use, our heedless overuse, has almost destroyed that world.

There are glimmers of hope. The dams that choke the Klamath River may be finally nearing removal, to the great benefit of salmon. Over \$6 million was recently made available to the wildlife refuges to lease additional water. But the comprehensive plan needed to assure a supply of water sufficient to prevent a recurrence of 2020's botulism tragedy remains elusive.

In my mind's eye, I see the 60,000 dead birds gathered in a great poisoned pile, a pyramid of lost lives. The bodies are perfect and unmarked. The feathers are still beautiful. If the masters of the Klamath Basin's water, all the contending parties, could be brought to stand before that awful sight, would they, I wonder, fall silent for a moment? Would their dusty hearts soften? Can we, at least, agree that this must never happen again?

Pepper Trail is a contributor to Writers on the Range, writersontherange.org, a nonprofit dedicated to spurring lively conversation about the West. He is a conservation biologist and writer in Ashland, Oregon.



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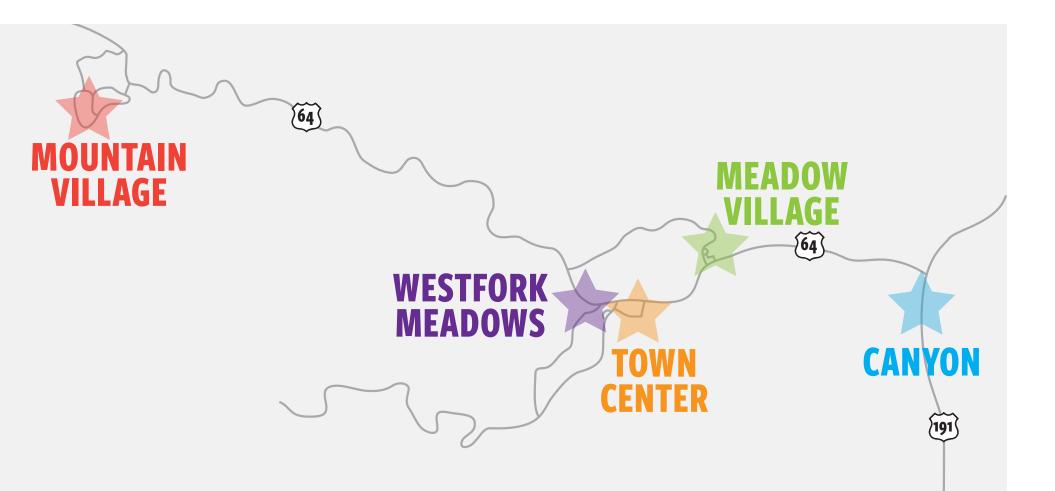
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Oh the Fountain of Youth! How much and often to drink it?

BY SAM VAN DE VELDE **EBS CONTRIBUTOR**

In the U.S., it is no surprise that cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death. More specifically, low cardiorespiratory fitness is the leading factor to all-cause mortality. According to epidemiological study of 66,000 individuals, those who were the least aerobically fit were at the highest risk of death. The individuals who did not consistently maintain cardiac fitness were more at risk than individuals who have diabetes, obesity and smoke combined. Therefore, if you can't get someone to quit smoking, control diabetes or weight, the best solution is to at least increase their cardiorespiratory fitness.

If exercise was a medication it would be liquid gold, and as an exercise physiologist I should be rich!

Generic Name: Physical Activity

Other Brand Names: Jogging, hiking, skiing, swimming, biking, running, tennis, soccer, basketball, water aerobics, dancing ... the list goes on.Dosage: See an exercise professional to see what exercise prescription is right for you.

Common Side Effects: Decreased blood pressure, decreased depression, improved lipid profile, better sleep, lower blood sugar, weight loss, increased energy, increased self-esteem, increased mental focus, increased longevity, decreased injury rates, better balance etc.

In Big Sky, there is no shortage of access to the fountain of youth that is exercise. Big Sky holds world class skiing, biking, hiking, Nordic trails and a culture of active lifestyles. However, with the massive surge of popularity in endurance sports and ultra-distance events, we are seeing the dangerous side effects of getting the dosage wrong on the other end of the spectrum.

Training and racing at high levels of intensity and volume can elicit a high-performance response now whilst also producing cardiac toxicity which could negatively impact health later. An exercise physiologist can understand your unique physiology following metabolic testing, known as a Lactate & Vo2max test, and design a training plan and guidance on how to properly signal and stress adaptations to the cardiovascular system to improve your biking, hiking, skiing and mountaineering performance throughout your lifespan.

Explore Big Sky

Preventing cardiac toxicity through endurance endeavors becomes crucial for athletes around their mid 30s and on deep into the masters category of athlete exerciser. Not only will this athlete now improve their race efforts year in year out but will also be preserving longevity in the same course.

Whether you are a competitive athlete, a recreational exerciser, or have cardiovascular disease, the exercise dosage (intensity, frequency, duration, type) needs to be tailored to your unique physiology for optimal sports performance, health and longevity. We can have all three with the insight to performance and metabolic testing, and then tailoring training unique to your physiology to perform better and live longer.

The Services Sam Offers – Endurance Coaching. Performance Testing. Sport Specific Strength Training. Cardiac Disease Prevention.

Sam Van de Velde is a Msc. Exercise Physiologist at Lone Peak Performance. Sam received his Master's degree in High Altitude Exercise Physiology at Western Colorado University and has coached collegiate cross country and track, mountain biking, big mountain snowboarding and most recently was supervisor of a cardiac rehabilitation program in Salida, Colorado, and an adjunct professor at Colorado Mountain College in Human Nutrition, Wellness and Performance.

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Dropping in on 2021

BY DAN EGAN EBS SKI COLUMNIST



PHOTO BY KATHRYN COSTELLO PHOTOGRAPHY

The freedom found in skiing and snowboarding is instant and rewarding. From the moment you point yourself downhill, gravity takes over and going with the flow often is the best decision. I often say, "don't let a bad turn contaminate the next good one." With that in mind, goal setting in 2021 will not be hard—the challenge will be to not drag 2020 forward to muddle the new year. My plan is to start small and work up to the big stuff.

It is here in the mountains surrounded by kindred spirits that I find my energy. When I ride up the lift and watch

people gliding down the slope, something inside of me recognizes the connection others are having to this energy and I sit in anticipation of it. Then at the top, I'm released, and I push off joining this force, anchored in gravitational pull. My eyes search out the fall line, and with a deep breath I exhale in the first turn and enter into it free of the past. The world is forgotten—I'm at peace. So simple, so fun and so rewarding.

In talking to skiers and riders about the new year, people often tell me about their aspirations. They have purchased new gear, gotten in better shape, been praying for snow and are committed to new challenges, large and small. Some are going to take a lesson; others go with a guide and take a risk. Often there is a "bucket list" of runs and routes they hope to "check off." These conversations are exciting, contagious and are easy to feed off of.

Then I ask them, "what is holding you back from doing these amazing things?" The answers tend to go across the board: "limited time," "someone to go with," "lack of experience," "conditions haven't been right," "recovering from an injury," "last time I tried I fell," or "someone told me, I'm not ready." To sum it up in general terms, it is the "I can'ts" and the "ya-buts" that keep us from accomplishing goals and these are tied to some sort of foundational fear anchored in the past.

I've never had such a list, yet I've gone to some amazing locations, stood on many a mountaintop, gazed at the surrounding beauty and dropped down some jaw-dropping routes. Over the years I've found that to find a way, you have to enter into the way—as the old Chinese saying goes, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." This saying always says to me, move forward, free of the past. The pace is not important here, moving towards the future is. With each pole plant, turn and run, I move away



PHOTO BY WARREN MILLER ENTERTAINMENT "FUTURE RETRO"

from the "ya-buts" and the "I can'ts" and enter into the way of doing connected to the belonging of the gravitational pull towards the future.

2021 will prove to be a fresh canvas, full of possibilities and it will be fueled by how we see it and what we attach ourselves to. 2020 was a season of change. The worldwide pandemic connects us to each other consciously and subconsciously. This connection has led to community service, compassion and empathy while incorporating a new concept of social distancing, while masking our expressions. For me that has been the hardest part, not seeing facial expressions. I miss giving and receiving a smile.

My resolutions this year will be tied to expressing my emotions and thoughts. I'm going to use each run to shake off the confusion of 2020 and embrace the potential of 2021 focused on family, friends and people I encounter along the way. My plan is to set the intention of showing my appreciation for others, share a socially distanced facial expression and move forward, one turn, one pole plant, one run at a time and embrace where the journey takes me.

Extreme Skiing Pioneer, Dan Egan coaches and teaches at Big Sky Resort during the winter. His steep camps run Feb. 25–27, March 4–6 and March 11–13. His newest book, "Thirty Years in a White Haze" will be released in February. Check out www.White-Haze.com for pre-orders and autographed copies.

Big Sky Ski Team U19s compete in Jackson

BY LUKE KIRCHMAYR

JACKSON, WYOMING – On Dec. 17-20, U19s from the Big Sky Ski Team went to Jackson, Wyoming to compete in the first International Ski Federation (FIS) race of the season. In an attempt to avoid transmission of COVID-19, race organizers split the field in two with the men racing on Dec. 17 and 18 and the women racing on Dec. 19 and 20. The race consisted of four slaloms for both genders with two races a day.

With competitive opponents and late starting positions, the Big Sky racers faced many challenges. Despite adverse conditions, many of the racers finished their runs and scored many necessary FIS points. For some of the athletes, this event was their first FIS race. Although the conditions were toughest for the new racers, they were still able to excel and score good FIS points, allowing them to get a better starting position at their next race.

"Jackson Hole was an inspiring and humbling experience," said Kjetil Hassman, a firstyear FIS racer from the Big Sky Ski Team. "It was great to compete against some of the Results from the Dec. 17-20 races are as follows:

Dec. 17, 2020: U19 Men <u>Race 1 Slalom</u> 53. Kirchmayr, Luke (1.58.04)

<u>Race 2 Slalom</u> 38. Beaty, Ryan (1.50.14) 39. Kirchmayr, Luke (1.50.18) 51. Hassman, Kjetil (2.03.37)

Dec. 18, 2020: U19 Men

<u>Race 1 Slalom</u> 40. Kirchmayr, Luke (1.49.44) 45. Hassman, Kjetil (1.55.84)

best ski racers in the West. I was fortunate to be there and I'm excited to return."



Members of the Big Sky Ski team gather at the base of Snow King resort. PHOTO BY LUKE KIRCHMAYR

<u>Race 2 Slalom</u> 51. Kirchmayr, Luke (1.51.20) 55. Hassman, Kjetil (1.54.58)

Dec. 19, 2020: U19 Women <u>Race 1 Slalom</u> 63. Johnson, Winter (2.18.22)

Race 2 Slalom 51. Johnson, Winter (2.06.79)

Dec. 20, 2020: U19 Women Race 1 Slalom 55. Davis, Hillary (2.07.45) 57. Johnson, Winter (2.08.05)

<u>Race 2 Slalom</u> 49. Davis, Hillary (2.04.50) 50. Johnson, Winter (2.05.27)

Teammates for life The Wilson sisters reflect on their bond on and off the field of play

BY BRANDON WALKER

BIG SKY – The Wilson sisters, Sara, 17, and Carly, 16, both ready themselves for the Lady Big Horns contest versus Shields Valley. Sara is forced to watch the game from the sidelines due to a previously sustained injury that continues to hold her out of action, meanwhile Carly will soon step on the court for a game she and her sister won't soon forget.

The game on the evening of Jan. 31, 2020 pits the Lone Peak High School varsity girls basketball team against the visiting Rebels in the latter stages of the 2019-2020 basketball season. Much to the delight of the hometown crowd, the game is closely contested throughout the first three quarters of play and even late into the fourth.

As the seconds wind down in the final quarter, Carly, or "Car" as she's referred to by her teammates, finds herself streaking down the court on a breakaway, closely trailed by a Rebel defender. The air is thick with tension—the Lady Big Horns are down by only one point. If Carly executes the layup, they'll have a shot at winning the game.

With roughly eight seconds to play Carly gathers the outlet pass and calmly avoids the defender as she lays the ball into the basket, giving LPHS a one point lead of their own and sending the Lady Big Horn faithful into a frenzy. Lone Peak went on to win the game following a defensive stop on the ensuing possession.

"I think we ... won [at] the last second because one of our teammates had a block and she had an amazing layup right at the end which won the game for us and just after that game I was so happy and proud," Sara said, offering kudos to her little sister.

Growing up in the community of Big Sky, Sara and Carly have shared the soccer field and basketball court together many times, creating memories like this one along the way.

"We have a lot of memories from playing together and I think we've gotten really close because of sports, because ... so much time is spent on the field [together]," Sara said.

Their experience as teammates is not one that all siblings have the opportunity to share as uncontrollable factors, such as age disparities and school size, may sometimes prevent this opportunity from becoming a reality.

"I'd say because Carly and I are sisters we have pretty good chemistry together," Sara said. "So like, we can usually find each other on the field in both sports and kind of rely on each other."

This testament is echoed by their mother, Vanessa Wilson: "They can find each other really well it seems like," she said. "They're aware of where each other is at and what strengths they have. I think they kind of know how to utilize that."

While participating in any athletic endeavor with a family member can be a memorable experience, it is not without its challenges, according to Vanessa. "I think the more you're with anyone, the more you realize you have to figure out how to keep the relationship going because sports does put a lot of strain on a



Siblings Carly (left) and Sara (right) Wilson have had the unique opportunity to participate in athletics as teammates while growing up in Big Sky. PHOTO COURTESY OF VANESSA WILSON

While their favorite sports vary—Sara prefers soccer and Carly favors basketball—they both agree that they turn their competitiveness up a notch when competing against each other in a practice setting.

As basketball season begins, Carly reflected on a play that was named after her and her sister from last basketball season: "So they had this cut that we'd go in and pop out and grab the ball and they called it the "Wilson sister cut" because they wanted us both to do it," she said. "I just thought that was funny and that was what it was called the rest of the year."

The Wilson sisters, who also have a younger brother, enjoy riding together to and from practices and games and more importantly their relationship as siblings affords them the ability to openly reflect and share thoughts with one another.

"... At the end of each game, and practice, we talk about what happened and we can be pretty honest and we can be brutal to each other," Sara said. "Like, 'how did I play,' you know, and Carly will tell me what she honestly thinks and I think that that would be weird to not have next year."

Vanessa compares Sara and Carly's relationship to that of twins, typically referring to them in tandem as "the girls" and remarking that they even sometimes receive the same Christmas gifts and open them simultaneously. She described Carly as more competitive while Sara is more relaxed, producing a sort of yin and yang balance.

"... They've had their sibling rivalries but ... they've always just found a playmate in each other or just [a] friend or somebody to hang out with," Vanessa said.

The sisters' bond runs much deeper than simply that of teammates on an athletic field. Sara and Carly carve out a day each week to eat their lunch together and even participate in the same school clubs such as National Honor Society, Interact club, band and performing arts.

relationship," she said.

Vanessa tried to guide the siblings toward different athletic activities during their childhood, in hopes of avoiding sibling conflicts. But ultimately, Sara and Carly shared an unwavering passion for soccer and basketball.

"... As a mom you know you worry that one would always be really good and the other one would always be in the shadow, but honestly they kind of take turns," Vanessa said. "One will have a great game, the other one won't and then the next time, Carly will have a great game and Sara won't, so, it's worked out pretty well."

Even when they weren't wearing the same uniform, Carly remembers eagerly wanting to. As a fourth grader, she recalls experiencing the excitement from the stands as Sara's fifth grade basketball team participated in a tournament.

"I remember they went really far in that tournament and got a trophy," she said. "... I was there along [for] the entire thing and I just could not wait to play the next year, like it was such torture for me to go everywhere with my sister and watch them play and not be able to play with them." At home they enjoy watching television shows with each other, including "The Bachelor" and spending time with one another while in the company of friends. But while they share a large portion of their daily routines, the pair also find time for themselves, according to their mom.

Sara is now a senior at LPHS and beginning her final school sponsored athletics season alongside her younger sister. She plans to attend Northern Arizona University in the fall and recognizes it will be an adjustment from what she's accustomed to.

"It's not just my sister, I've got a close bond with my family and even just school and my friends," she said. "So I'm going to be probably pretty upset the first semester, missing home." The pair both nodded in agreement when asked if they plan to visit each other when Sara leaves in the fall.

With the COVID-19 pandemic ongoing, Carly, a junior, is hopeful that her sister will get the opportunity to participate in her final basketball season. The 2020-2021 basketball season may be the parting act for the "Wilson sister cut," but the girls will always have their memories as teammates to reflect on and a bond that will last a lifetime.



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A clean slate, yours to create



BY LINDA ARNOLD EBS CONTRIBUTOR

The New Year is always my favorite time of year. 365 delicious days, 52 wonderful weeks and 12 magnificent months!

2021 has even more significance following our unprecedented experiences in 2020. Whew—what a year. We're still in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic,

with some of the largest numbers of cases and deaths now taking place, and there have been devastating consequences with the loss of human lives, job layoffs and the closing of businesses.

A Shot in the Arm

Vaccines are arriving for the COVID-19 virus, and that's encouraging news. Unfortunately, they did not arrive soon enough for those who lost their lives—or those of you who lost relatives or friends.

I'm sure we all wonder what 2021 will be like. While there are many things that are still out of your control, your perspective has a lot to do with the way you'll see things.

What Lens Are You Looking Through?

The lens you choose has everything to do with how you view your world: Awareness – Pay attention to the information you take in. Negativity – Think about setting some healthy boundaries on the amount of negativity you allow into your life, from friends, relatives, colleagues or the media. Personalizing – When something bad occurs, do you automatically blame yourself? Catastrophizing – Do you usually anticipate the worst? Polarizing – Do you see things only as good or bad – or black or white?

Showing Up

How will you show up in 2021? Being present, or stuck in the past? Being grateful, or worrying about the future?

No question, your world has been rocked, and your way of life has changed dramatically. So, be sure to give yourself some credit.

Where Do We Go from Here?

Bill Gates says it will be 2022 before things start to get back to "normal." I'm more optimistic. I'm sure he's taking in the global impact, while I'm focusing more on our everyday lives in our communities.

We've learned to live with uncertainty. That's one of the toughest scenarios to endure. We like to plan and organize, and we had to "wing it" for much of the past year. My key word for 2020 is adapt. We've had to do it time and time again. Even if we haven't become adept!

Heart Space

While I'm all for positive thinking, I realize the value in genuinely feeling our feelings. Give yourself permission to do just that.

It's the contrasts in our lives that weave the rich tapestries. And paying attention to those heart space moments.

You probably have them more than you think: when your dog or cat greets you with unconditional love, when you're permitted by a fellow motorist to switch lanes or you get a "thank you" email. They have everything to do with the quality of your life.

Happiness, Joy and Contentment

This is a perfect time to ponder one of my favorite themes: variations on happiness, contentment and joy. To me, joy is more of an episode, while happiness and contentment signify ongoing states of well-being.

One of my favorite quotes from an old movie says it all: "I'm content with where I've been, and I'm proud of who I am."

Here's a little mantra I composed that may give you some perspective for 2021: Peace on Earth Is a lofty goal. But inner peace Is in my control.

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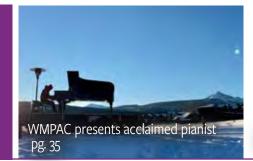


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BUSINESS

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Making it in Big Sky: Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Montana

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY – From a cattle grazing operation to three high profile mountain clubs, Don Pilotte of Berkshire Hathaway has seen Big Sky grow through many phases.

When he originally moved out to Bozeman, Pilotte would come up to Big Sky and see cattle grazing in the meadow area. He watched Big Sky Resort open in 1972, and subsequently was involved in the creation of Moonlight Basin as one of the property's original listing brokers.

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Montana Properties is Montana's premiere full service real estate company, and it is the highest-ranked real estate company in the state of Montana for annual sales.

Berkshire Hathaway, operated by Mike Basile and Dan Ermatinger, is now the largest real estate company in Montana with offices in 17 different towns. The company has gone through several name iterations but Pilotte explained that the basic company has been the same since about the early 1970s. Since rebranding with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices, the company has opened offices in Livingston, Helena, Butte and Bigfork and now has nearly 275 agents across the state.

The Big Sky office opened in the early '90s and Pilotte started working in Big Sky at that point. Originally, he explained, he was a one-man show at the office, which has now grown to an eight-person agent team with a much larger management team.

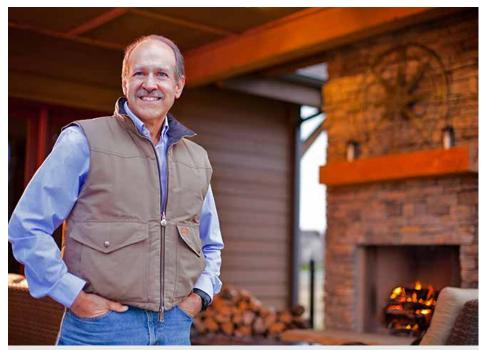
Explore Big Sky sat down with Pilotte, a broker with the Big Sky firm, to talk about the history and growth of Berkshire Hathaway over the years.

Explore Big Sky: *How do the Montana offices fit into the larger network of offices?* **Don Pilotte:** "We all are part of a franchise which provides a compendium of services like brochures, a lot of industry research and support, and they provide a lot of additional advertising exposure. We have international exposure for properties that we list due to the Berkshire franchise. Within the company, we have a farm ranch division, a commercial division, a luxury division, and then general real estate."

"We have a group that started partially out of COVID-19, composed of Berkshire offices in the western resorts. We tried to have regular telephone calls between Sun Valley, Park City, Jackson Hole, Big Sky, and Tahoe, Crested Butte, Vale, etc. We try to get on the phone once a month and have a Zoom meeting and talk about what is going on in the various markets. If we see something, developing in one market, perhaps, hypothetically something going on in Colorado or Utah, it might be the beginning of a trend."

EBS: How has Berkshire Hathaway grown with Big Sky?

DP: "We have two offices in Bozeman and we have an office in Big Sky, and the numbers of associates have raised over the years. The Bozeman and Big Sky area was a much smaller place 20 years ago. One of the things that has really changed a lot, and this is partially COVID-related, is that at one point, basically everybody worked just exclusively in the office ... We're now seeing a lot of people who are working remotely ... Technology has probably been the biggest change that's allowed more flexibility in the offices and allowed companies to do a much better job communicating with their buyers and sellers or people just generally interested in real estate."



Don Pilotte has worked at the Big Sky office of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Montana Properties, the largest real estate company in Montana, since the early '90s. PHOTO COURTESY OF DON PILOTTE

EBS: How has Berkshire Hathaway adapted during the pandemic?

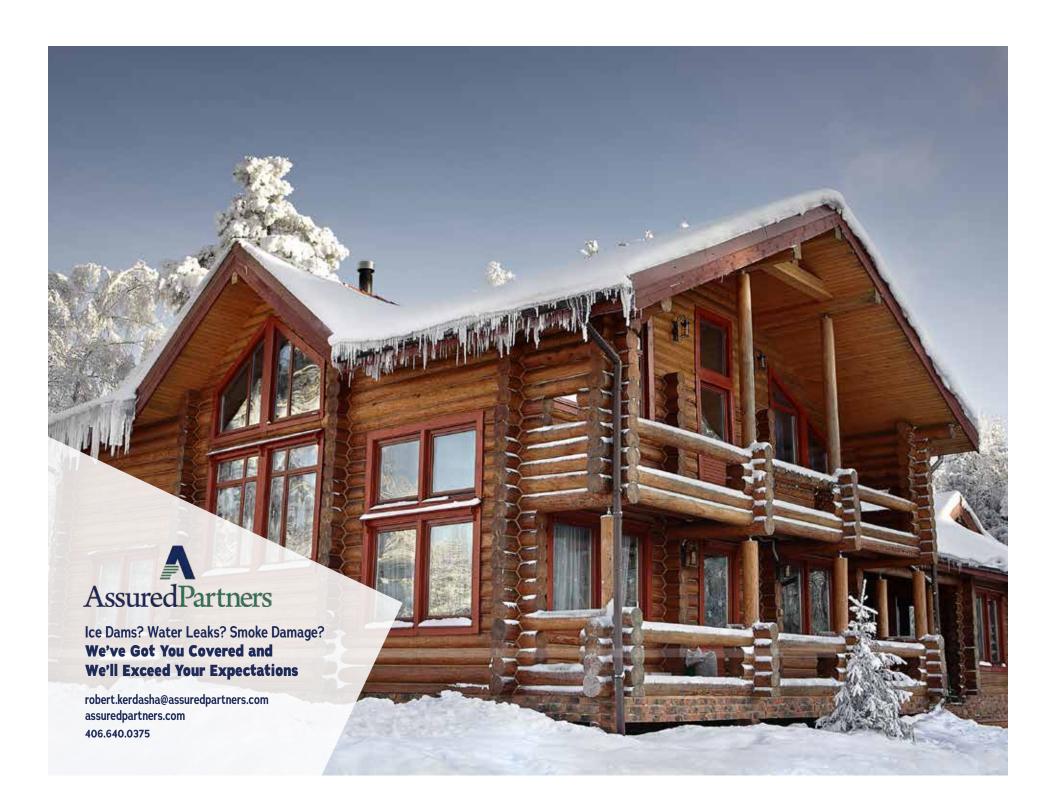
DP: "We have essentially canceled staff meetings, we're Zooming. One of the things the franchise allows us to do is they develop sales templates, sales materials, that you can customize. If you are marketing a luxury house, you can go to that home, shoot pictures, send those into Berkshire's resource center, a brochure is designed, it's sent to a printer, and in one to two days a finished brochure is at your door, waiting to be given out as collateral to either buyers or sellers."

EBS: *Why is Berkshire Hathaway consistently ranked as the No. 1 brokerage in Montana?* **DP:** "It's due to the size of the company. We're in 16 different towns, all across the state. We have a variety of services, we can easily make brochures, we can put together collateral material out of standard formats that are developed on the corporate level. We have a tremendous support staff. I cannot impress upon people how important that support staff is, we have a full-time graphic artist within the company. We have probably the greatest number of support staff of any company in the state. We've got one specialist who basically just does ad placement, we've got another specialist who is working on internet, making sure that the websites are functioning. We have individuals who are experts in proofreading and putting together brochures. ... If we need a map done, that may be a map that shows a subdivision, shows which parcels are for sale, which parcels are currently available, which parcels were maybe pending sales, full-time graphic artists can put that together in a very quick response time."

EBS: What's the best business advice you have ever received?

DP: "The best business advice that I've ever received was from a longtime business partner. We were looking at some raw, vacant land, and the advice was 'let the land tell you what to do.' That's sage advice. You're looking at doing something, study that piece of ground, let it tell you what to do, and it'll all work out for the best."

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WMPAC presents: acclaimed pianist, weatherized piano, ski trails, sunset 'In a Landscape' takes the performing arts outdoors

BY MIRA BRODY

BIG SKY – The attendees of the Warren Miller Performing Arts Center's "In a Landscape" performance on Dec. 27 and 28 were not seated but rather walking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Most were actually too far to hear the music clearly from its source: the Big Sky Resort golf course's driving range, where it resonated from a 1912 nine-foot Steinway piano on a flatbed platform. At its helm, in metallic futuristic-looking gloves that allow his hands dexterity in the below-freezing temperatures is awardwinning concert pianist Hunter Noack.

His performance, broadcasted via Bluetooth headphones, is part of a series in its sixth year called Classical Music in the Wild, founded by Noack with the mission of bringing classical music into the wilderness so that the experience of listening to it can be enjoyed—and enhanced—by the surrounding landscape.



Pianist Hunter Noack performs Clair de Lune by Claude Debussy in the presence of Lone Mountain as the sun sets. PHOTO BY MIRA BRODY

"We are so excited to be here and just so grateful to

John [Zirkle] and the Warren Miller Performing Arts Center for taking a chance and for hosting us and making us feel so welcome," said Noack between sets. "As I overheard John (WMPAC's executive director) say yesterday, there are a million things that could have gone wrong, so it's sort of a miracle that this is working."

The "million things" included transporting the piano via snowcat onto the golf course, creating the 1,000-yard labyrinth of groomed ski trails, made possible by Lone Mountain Ranch, and putting on three different shows, one of which was at 8 p.m. by the light of a nearly full moon. Just as the pianist wore warm gloves in the outdoor concert, the Steinway has enhancements of it's own that make it more resistant to humidity and temperature changes.

Although it was his first time performing in Montana, Lone Mountain and its neighbors in the Madison Range felt like a natural backdrop. Since 2016, "In a Landscape" has performed 83 concerts in 72 different locations including Oregon, Washington and California and has been critically acclaimed by media outlets including CBS This Morning, the LA Times, PBS and TED.

Before the conclusion of the show, Zirkle, the executive director of WMPAC, spoke of how WMPAC had adapted the theater's winter lineup to COVID-19, including an enhanced air filtration system, shorter shows, requiring masks indoors, limited and spaced seating and by offering virtual shows for those who feel safer viewing with their families from home.

"If you have the opportunity to support artists, wherever your community is, whether that's Big Sky or somewhere out there, we encourage you to please do that," Zirkle said on stage. "Remember, more than 50 percent of artists are out of work right now. This is an incredibly difficult year, and artists are going to be some of the people who come back last, way after the vaccine is distributed, so thank you

in advance for any support that you can provide."

WMPAC's next performance, and first of the new year, is the Big Sky Laugh Fest on Jan. 8 and 9 featuring three acclaimed stand-up artists, Sara Schaefer, Brian Simpson and Adam Cayton-Holland.

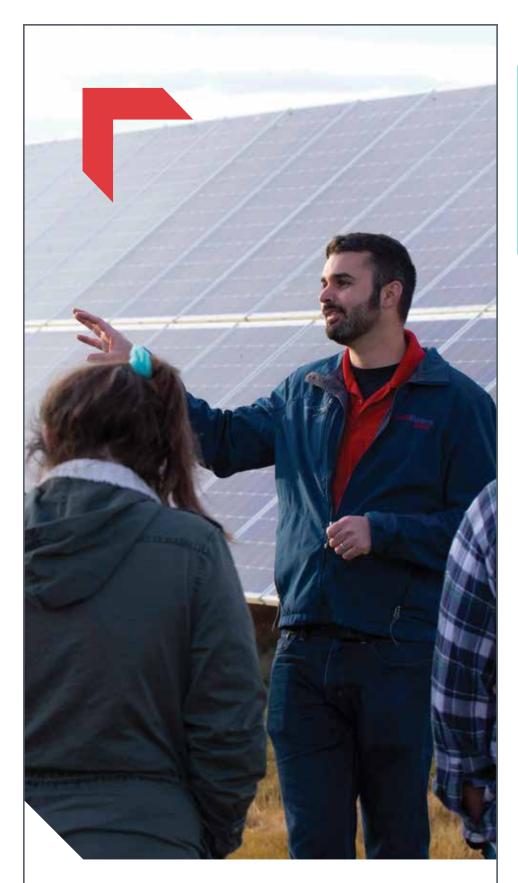


On Dec. 27 and 28 the Warren Miller Performing Arts Center presented In a Landscape which featured a nine foot Steinway piano, acclaimed pianist Hunter Noack and 1,000 yards of groomed cross-country ski trails. PHOTO BY MIRA BRODY

Just as WMPAC explores new avenues for keeping the arts alive and accessible this winter and through a global pandemic, the evening's attendees too, are exploring the landscape around them, accompanied by their music-filled headphones. Signs around the golf course offer directions as well as encourage patrons to do something that not many theaters often do—wander.

Prior to Noack's final piece, Zirkle thanked guests for attending and motioned to the landscape around him as it slowly turned the shades of orange and pink that comes with the conclusion of another day.

"Thank you for joining tonight and let's enjoy that beautiful sunset together," he said.



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

BIG SKY EVENTS CALENDAR

Friday, Jan. 1 – Thursday, Jan. 14 If your event falls between Jan. 15 and Jan. 28, please submit it by Jan. 13 by emailing media@outlaw.partners

Friday, Jan. 1 Hair of the Dog Party Devil's Toboggan, Bozeman, 10 a.m.

Holiday Food Drive Bozeman Hot Springs, 10 a.m.

Saturday, Jan. 2 Saturday Sweat Moving Mountains, 8 a.m.

Winter Wonderland Montana Science Center, Bozeman, 2 p.m.

Sunday, Jan. 3 Saxy Sundays The Standard, 5 p.m.

Monday, Jan. 4 Local's Night Bunkhouse Brewery, Bozeman, 2 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 5 Open Mic Comedy American Legion, Bozeman, 9 p.m.

Sunrise Karaoke Bar IX, Bozeman, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 6 Glide Big Sky Big Sky Community Park, 2 p.m.

Educator Wednesdays Bunkhouse Brewery, Bozeman, 2 p.m.

Thursday, Jan. 7 Thursday Night Ice Climbers Hyalite Canyon, Bozeman, 5 p.m.

Open Steam Lab Montana Science Center, Bozeman, 3 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 9

Big Sky Laugh Fest Warren Miller Performing Arts Center, 5:30 p.m.

Bozeman Winter Farmers Market Gallatin County Fairgrounds, 9 a.m.

Sunday, Jan. 10

Homeless Day of Action Human Resources Development Council, Bozeman, 8 a.m.

We are still here and this is our story Emerson Center for the Arts and Culture, Bozeman, 12 p.m.

Monday, Jan. 11

Trivia Bozeman Taproom, 7 p.m.

Exploring Yellowstone Through Art Online, access here: yellowstonegatewaymuseum.org

Tuesday, Jan. 12 Bingo Night Molly Brown, Bozeman, 7 p.m.

Rich Mayo Kountry Korner Café, Four Corners, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 13 Big Sky Town Race Series Big Sky Resort, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Super Smash Bros Game Night El Camino Bar, Bozeman, 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, Jan. 14 Thursday Night Ice Climbers

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View more of the story at NorthWesternEnergy.com/BrightFuture

Friday, Jan. 8 Big Sky Laugh Fest Warren Miller Performi

Warren Miller Performing Arts Center, 5:30 p.m.

Music & Margaritas Santa Fe Reds, Bozeman, 6 p.m. Hyalite Canyon, Bozeman, 5 p.m.

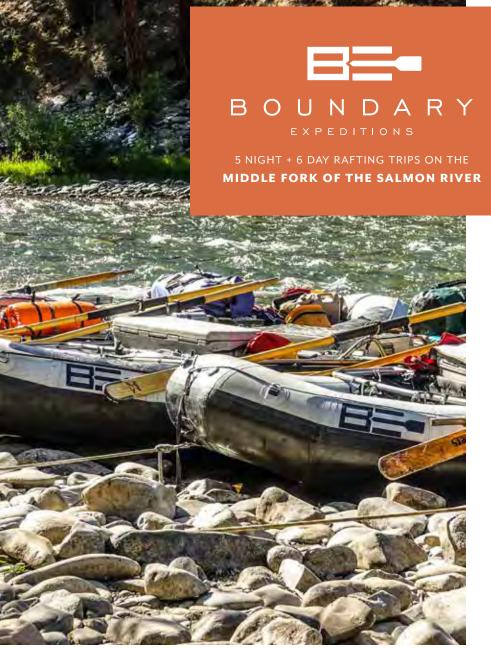
Women Elders Speak

Online, access Here: www. countrybookshelf.com/event/ country-bookshelf-presentswomen-elders-spek

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BIG SKY - LAND



8 Little Thunder 4,321 +/- SQ FT / \$2.975M



2019 Riv 5,000 +/-1,900 +/- SQ



Lot 38 Bitterbrush Trail 1.270 +/- ACRES / \$800K



Saddle Ridge Unit U-2 3,155 +/- SQ FT / \$1.75M



The Ranches at Yellow Mountain - 2A-1B 526 +/- ACRES / \$2,390,000



Moosewood Lots 3 & 4 Lot 3 / 6.9 +/- ACRES / \$1.4M Lot 4 / 5 +/- ACRES / \$1.1M



Lot 8G-1 North Fork Road 20.01 +/- ACRES \$1.3M



Gallatin Foothills Lot 4 1.519 +/- ACRES / \$395K Call for more information

NEW LISTING



177 Silver Run Drive 0.402 +/- ACRES / \$329K

UNDER CONTRACT

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529 Clancy Way, Bozeman, MT 4200+/- SQ FT / 1.01 +/- ACRES \$1.69M



Homestead at the Beacon Butte, MT 640 +/- ACRES / \$1.65M

RECENTLY SOLD



Yellowstone Ranch Preserve List Price: \$19M

RECENTLY SOLD





13285 Dry Creek Road Bozeman, MT 7448 +/- SQ FT / \$5.95M

SOLD



2005 Upper Chief Joseph 7,690 +/- SQ FT / \$4.3M



Mountain Meadows 120 +/- ACRES / \$3.495M



Big Sky Corner Property List Price: \$3.24M





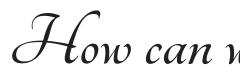


2078 Little Coyote List Price: \$1.079M Ski Tip Lot 10 List Price: \$975K

& K

Real Estate

The Ranches at Yellow Mountain - Tract 3B-1 23 +/- ACRES / \$875k The Ranches at Yellow Mountain - Tract 1A-1 21 +/- ACRES / \$795k 189 B Pheasant Tail 1590 +/- SQ FT / \$699K



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LISTING

verview Lane SQ FT Home FT Barn / \$2.5M



49825 Gallatin Road 2,568 +/- SQ FT / \$1.3M Parcel 1 - 5.0+/- ACRES



Lodges at Elkhorn Creek 2,060 - 2,203 +/- SQ FT \$1M - \$2.25M





106 Prairie Fire Rd 3594 +/- SQ FT plus garage / \$1.325M 1.679 +/- ACRES

UNDER CONTRACT



Gallatin Foothills Lot 5 \$950K Call for more information



The Ranches at Yellow Mountain - Tract 2A-1A 246.9 +/- ACRES / \$2,390,000



The Ranches at Yellow Mountain - Tract 3A 20 +/- ACRES / \$817,500

COMMERCIAL



The Ranches at Yellow Mountain - Tract 4A 20 +/- ACRES / \$817,500



The Ranches at Yellow Mountain - Tract 1L-2B 42.40 +/- ACRES / \$1.8M



Big EZ Lot 42: \$449K / 20 +/- ACRES Lot 43: \$425K / 20 +/- ACRES Combined: \$799K **BUSINESS**



Rocking S7 Ranch Lot 4 Bozeman, MT 20.232 +/- ACRES / \$650K



50 Ousel Falls Big Sky, MT *Call for details*



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Airport Garages Bozeman, MT \$29.9K per unit Taking reservations for building G



Terranaut Adventure Vans Bozeman, MT Call for details



78 Meadow Village Dr. Big Sky, MT 4,769 +/- SQ FT / \$2.1M



3250 Two Moons Rd 4,064 +/- SQ FT / \$1.995M



49820 Gallatin Road 3,677 +/- SQ FT / \$1.895M



Crail Ranch Unit 40 List Price: \$1.35M



1955 Little Coyote Drive 3,100 +/- SQ FT / \$1.25M

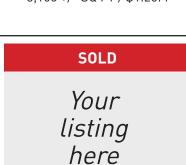






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Lot 39 Diamond Hitch 1 +/- ACRE / \$595K Marketplace Unit 104 Big Sky, MT 1,204 +/- SQ FT/ \$560,920 Marketplace Unit 202 Big Sky, MT 966 +/- SQ FT / \$389K

130 Mountain Man Trail Montana Ranch 20.8 +/- ACRES / \$325K

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NOTICE



NOTICE TO THE BIG SKY FIRE DEPARTMENT FIRE DISTRICT MEMBERS

An Election of two trustees for the Big Sky Fire District Board of Trustees will be held on May 4, 2021.

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 <u>Gallatin County</u> <u>Election Department</u> no later than 5:00 p.m. on February 8, 2021.





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Cocktails to bring in the new year

There's nothing like a good cocktail to warm your soul, reflect on memories past, lessons learned and bring in the new year. Each of us thought up our favorite winter holiday cocktail to share with our readers. Give some a try, expand your palate and night cap the holiday and 2020 with some flavor.

– The Editors

Pomegranate, grapefruit jalapeño Moscow mule



The cocktails were great, but the dogs insisted on stealing the show. PHOTO BY MIRA BRODY

Three flavors perfectly balanced against one or two shots of your favorite vodka.

- 3 ounces ginger beer
- 2 ounces plain seltzer
- 2 ounces grapefruit juice
- 1-2 ounces pomegranate juice
- Heavy splash of lime juice
- 1-2 shots of your preferred vodka
- Pomegranate seeds
- Two slices of jalapeno
- Slice of grapefruit garnish

Method

Combine all ingredients and stir. Serve with garnishes and enjoy.

Hot Toddy



For an aperitif to warm you from the inside out, the classic hot toddy is an easy choice. Honey's sweetness marries lemon's tartness for a perfect accent. Spike it with your choice of spirit, though we suggest a mountain man's favorite, whiskey, or keep it local with a honey moonshine distilled in the heart of the Madison Valley.

Mulled Wine

Recipe by Ali on Gimme Some Oven



It is a chilly time of year, and sometimes, hot chocolate just won't cut it. For a warmth that sets a fire in your belly and settles in your bones, mulled wine is a spicy, soul-warming delight. There are many variations on this simple recipe, and it is easy to customize to your liking. Included below is a traditional version of this timeless drink.

Ingredients

- 1 (750 ml) bottle of dry red wine
- 1 orange, sliced into rounds
- 8 whole cloves
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 2 star anise
 - 2 to 4 tablespoons sugar, honey, or maple syrup to taste
 - optional add-in: 1/4 cup brandy (or your favorite liqueur)
- optional garnishes: citrus slices (orange, lemon and/or lime), extra cinnamon sticks, extra star anise

Method

Combine the wine, orange slices, cloves, cinnamon, star anise, 2 tablespoons sweetener, and brandy in a large saucepan. Cook the mulled wine on medium-high heat until it just barely reaches a simmer. Avoid letting it bubble — you don't want to boil off the alcohol. Reduce heat to low, cover, and let the wine simmer for at least 15 minutes or up to 3 hours. Using a fine mesh strainer, remove and discard the orange slices, cloves, cinnamon sticks, and star anise. Serve with your favorite garnishes.

White Russian



A disco-era drink revived by the Coen Brothers' sharp-humored 1998 film "The Big Lebowski," the White Russian is a fast-drinking creamy treat with an aesthetic on-par with a snowy Big Sky winter day. Be careful though, this decadent cocktail has a deceptively sweet taste. Don't forget it's two parts booze!

The Hot Toddy, a pleasant blend of sweet and tangy, is the perfect drink for a warm-up. PHOTO BY WALLY GOBETZ

- Optional (but festive) garnish
- Cinnamon stick
- Lemon peel

Method

Boil water and combine with other ingredients in mug. Add cinnamon stick to the mug and rest lemon peel on the rim for garnish. Enjoy!

Ingredients:

- ³/₄ cup of water
- 2 tsp lemon
- 1.5 oz whiskey or Willie's Honey Moonshine
- 2 tsp honey, if you opt out of the honey moonshine

The White Russian, a cocktail best known for its many appearances in the Coen Brothers' 1998 film "The Big Lebowski," is a creamy treat best enjoyed in the winter. PHOTO BY STUART WEBSTER

Ingredients

- 1 oz coffee liqueur
- 1 oz vodka
- 1.5 oz heavy cream

Method

Shake all ingredients together with a generous scoop of ice for a frothy finish.

For best results, serve in a chilled glass and enjoy beside a crackling fire after a day spent playing in the snow.





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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.

That's not true



BY SCOTT MECHURA EBS FOOD COLUMNIST

"Don't order fish on Sundays and Mondays," The late Anthony Bourdain famously wrote in his kitchen expose, Kitchen Confidential, that restaurants don't receive fresh fish on the weekends, therefore by Sunday or even Monday, you are eating less than stellar fish. Today, that is far from the case.

The advancement of fishing, icing and shipping possibilities make fresh fish available all the time. In fact, much fresh fish these days is what we refer to as "shore to door in 24."

Chefs don't like each other. You'll find a prickly personality in every profession, but chefs often chuckle and wonder where this idea ever came from. Chefs are a bunch with a strong sense of comradery. We eat and drink together, trade stories, staff and ideas all the time and always want to see others succeed.

A chef's favorite cut of beef is tenderloin. Ask 100 people what their favorite steak is and 95 will tell you it's a tenderloin. But ask 100 chefs what theirs is and two will tell you it's the tenderloin. Tenderloin lacks texture and flavor compared to any other cut. Those other 98 chefs will probably tell you it's the small eye end of the rib eye.

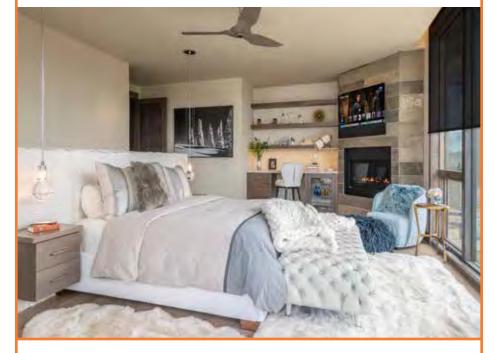
You should rub chopsticks together before using them. Doing anything other than eating with your chopsticks is rude and considered poor manners. This includes tapping, pointing and rubbing them together to remove what you think are wood shavings. Some sushi chefs regard this as in insult in that they believe you think they gave you poor quality service ware.

As long as we're on the topic of chopsticks and sushi, stirring together wasabi and soy sauce is another no-no in Japanese culture.

That's not wasabi. Real true wasabi is very difficult to find and is expensive. Not only that, but it is also quite mild. More often than not, you are actually eating hot Chinese mustard powder dyed green.

Spitting in or otherwise contaminating a guest's dish. This may make for an entertaining comedic scene in a movie, but the reality is far from funny. Aside from an instant termination from anyone I've ever known in the industry, I've never known even the saltiest of cooks ever willingly or knowingly contaminate another person's food.

Traditional martinis are made with vodka. A martini is made with gin, vermouth, an olive and sometimes a bit of olive brine, making it "dirty." Any cocktail made with vodka is a cocktail, not a martini.



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The success of a restaurant lies on the quality of the food. Or to say it another way, if your food is of high consistent quality, you will succeed. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Great food and service get people in your doors. But in an industry that makes, on average, six cents on the dollar, good knowledge of numbers and costs keep those doors open.

Serving is easy. Serving, as well as cooking, are not placeholder jobs for many. They are both trades that are taught in culinary and hospitality schools and can be excellent careers that produce a solid income as well as work, social and technical skills that translate into many other aspects of work and life. Serving in a busy or fine dining restaurant is incredibly challenging.

Great service is more important than great food. There was a time when it was all about the combination of the two. And in many concepts that can still be true. But more and more we are moving towards concepts where we no longer rely on a server because they are even harder to find than a cook.

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.

American Life in Poetry: Column 823

BY TED KOOSER, *U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006*

Time to clean out a closet and make room for whatever 2021 will bring us! I hope every one of you has a new year that's much better and happier than the one we're all shoving behind. This is the last column I'll have a part in, and I've written a little goodbye poem for you. Happy New Year!

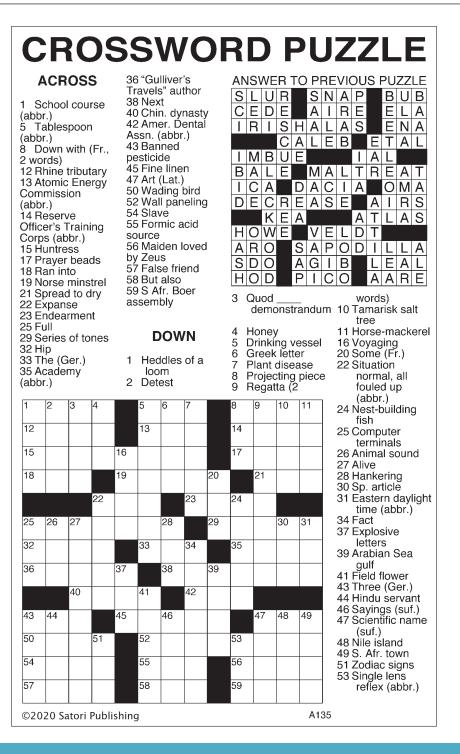
A Donation of Shoes

They're on their way to Goodwill in Destiny's old cardboard carton, the flaps folded inside, lending its scuffed shoulders a look of authority, the box knowing the route, the shoes badly lost and confused, their toes starting in every direction at once, clambering over each other, laces entangled-wingtip, slip-on, workboot and sneaker—every pair trying to get one last, lingering look at the closet before settling down into their smell. What's the saddest about this is seeing those insoles floating up naked, pale flounders beat flat and then dried, no longer to swim through the ocean of days, led on by plump dolphins of feet.

American Life in Poetry provides newspapers and online publications with a free weekly column featuring contemporary American poems. The sole mission of this project is to promote poetry: American Life in Poetry seeks to create a vigorous presence for poetry in our culture. There are no costs for reprinting the columns; we do require that you register your publication here and that the text of the column be reproduced without alteration.



"We need not lose hope.



BIG SKY BEATS



2020 streaming trends

Last year was strange. Now at the outset of 2021, 2020 is in our rearview mirror and we are able to reflect on the tumultuous year in its entirety. While last year was loaded with

challenges, certain things stayed the same, like music. Our favorite artists still created and released albums, and music was a constant companion for many in

We just need to locate where it dwells."

Terry Tempest Williams,"Erosion"

their home offices. Spotify, the music streaming giant, synthesized 2020 with their "2020 Wrapped" metrics, which reveal the trends that shaped streaming for the year.

During a time when many people switched to working from home, 2020 saw an uptick in nostalgia-themed work-from-home playlists, according to Spotify.

#2020WRAPPED #2020WRAPPED DEdddWalwococ#

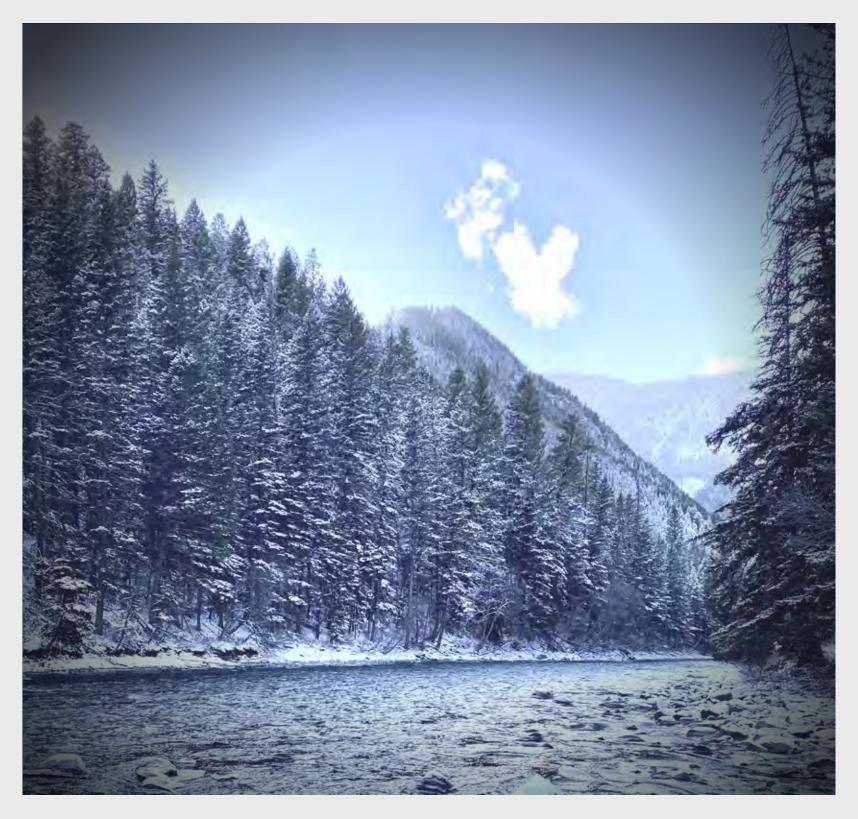
PHOTO COURTESY OF SPOTIFY

The top artist from 2020 was Puerto Rican rapper Bad Bunny who claimed the top spot with more than 8.3 billion streams from around the globe. Bad Bunny's album "YHLQMDLG," which was released in late February of 2020, was the number one streamed album of the year

with 3.3 billion streams, according to Spotify. The album included 20 songs featuring collaborations with Sech, Anuel AA, and Daddy Yankee.

Finally, the most streamed song of the year, according to Spotify, was The Weekend's "Blinding Lights" with a whopping 1.6 billion streams.

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Big Sky TOP STORIES OF









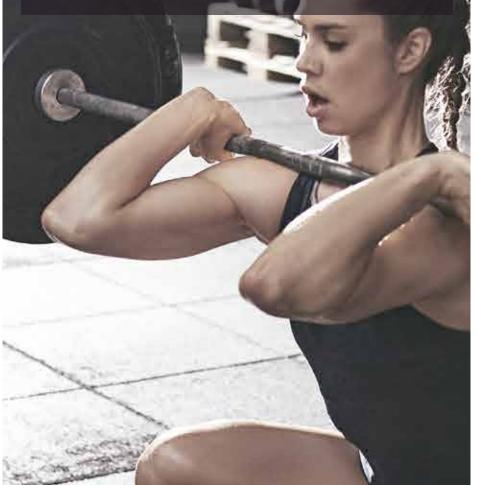
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Top Stories of 2020

Intro

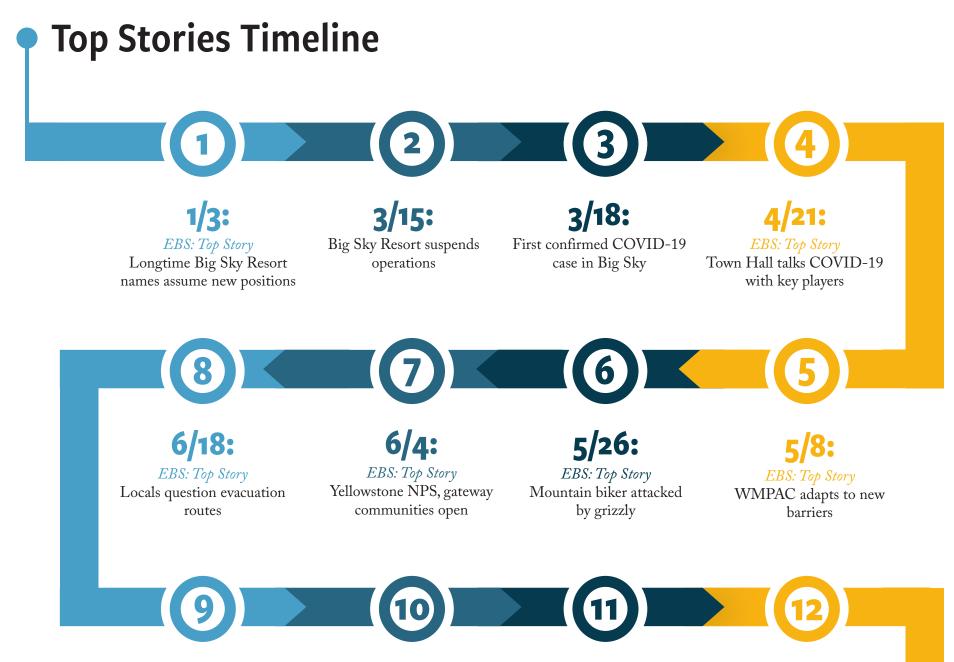
The year 2020 will go down in history, for better or worse. We'll either learn from the mistakes we made over the first year in this decade and it will be a turning point, or we won't.

As our team discussed how to pare down the hundreds of important stories we published in 2020, certain themes arose: tragedy, fear, uncertainty, sure. But also resiliency, unity and love. And those themes combined led to one overall message we want to convey in the Top Stories of 2020: Hope.

As we wound down a year many of us would like to forget, the holiday season brought with it the winter solstice—the shortest and darkest day of the year. We as human beings, however, have a choice. And rather than see Dec. 21 as the darkest day of 2020, we urge you to consider an alternative viewpoint: that every day thereafter is a step toward the light, one minute each day that we have more daylight and are working toward new beginnings, a season of hope and a year that already appears much brighter.

Looking back on 2020, we can—we must—learn from the past year. And we must boldly, together, take a collective step into the light. Happy New Year to all our readers, our families and our friends. May we all share in a brighter tomorrow. – *The Editors*

The following articles appeared in EBS over the course of 2020 and have been abridged here for brevity.



7/15:

8/12:

9/5:

11/7:



Longtime Big Sky Resort names assume new postions Taylor Middleton passes GM title to Troy Nedved

BY DOUG HARE

January 3



An avid endurance athlete, Troy Nedved took over as General Manager of Operations for Big Sky Resort last September and looks forward to continuing to improve lift infrastructure and snow-making capabilities on Andesite and Lone mountains. PHOTO COURTESY OF BIG SKY RESORT BIG SKY – In September 2019, Taylor Middleton of Big Sky Resort handed off his general manager title and responsibilities to maintain high-level oversight of Big Sky Resort's operational and budgetary performance and focus more on planning and long-term growth strategies to his longtime friend, Troy Nedved.

Nedved's 23-year career with Big Sky Resort placed him in roles in Mountain Sports, Guest Services, Base Camp and serving on the resort's executive team.

Nedved grew up in the Black Hills of South Dakota, in the Rapid

City area, where his passion for athletics and the outdoors blossomed from an early age.

"My family didn't ski. I didn't have the money to ski. So I went with church groups at night to Deer Mountain Ski Area which doesn't exist anymore," Nedved said. "All I knew was night skiing and I never had a ski lesson—which is interesting considering my future job, yeah that's been a core: ski instructor."

Nedved chose to study at Montana State University intending to go to law school, attaining both a criminal justice and biology degree, when life intervened. Throughout college, he worked at Bridger Bowl as a ski instructor to obtain a free pass. He also started working for the National Park Service during the summers while still at MSU, eventually becoming a permanent employee in 2000. He did not exactly sign up for a desk job, spending most of his time outside conducting forestry and park management, including firefighting by helicopter. Nedved lived in a teepee in Gardiner for two years down on the banks of the Yellowstone River across from the Yellowstone Raft Company, where he developed world-class abilities as a kayaker.

When Teton Gravity Research started making kayak movies, Nedved and his friends got the call as well. "We were pioneering lines that had never been done before: in Costa Rica and Nepal, but also stretches of river in Montana in the Crazy Mountains of Big Timber Creek and lots of runs in Beartooths that had never been floated," Nedved recounted.

"We spent a lot of time looking at maps, hiking around the mountains, finding stuff that was runnable versus not. It was a stage of kayaking community in Montana that we got started. Now the next generation of these kids is blowing my mind—doing things that we didn't even think was possible."

Nedved is an athlete's athlete. "I love competing in just about anything. When I was first in Montana, I found out about Powder 8s at Bridger Bowl. It was a cool event and we got into it," he said in a typically modest way. "It was just another thing to hone your skills as a ski instructor and a skiing professional."

Nedved has since won the national Powder 8 competition five times and competed on ESPN at the highest level of the niche sport in the Powder 8 World Championships held at Mike Wiegele's heliskiing operation in Canada. Even some twenty years later, he is still finding podiums in the aesthetically appealing alpine events with longtime partner Nick Herrin, currently the CEO of the Professional Ski Instructors of America. Nedved credits his year-round athletic pursuits for what keeps him in the condition to still make perfect turns.

In his new role as general manager, Nedved will lead all operations teams at the resort, including mountain operations, mountain services, mountain sports, lodging, food and beverage, IT, human resources, and the rental and retail divisions. He feels up to the task. While the new GM is impressed with the results of the renovation of the Mountain Mall, now dubbed The Exchange, and pleased with how the newly installed RFID technology makes loading lifts a more seamless operation, he is not one to rest on his laurels.

While Nedved steps into his GM role, his predecessor and mentor, Middleton, will assume the role of Chief Operating Officer and President of Big Sky Resort.

Town Hall talks COVID-19, reopening Montana with key players

EBS STAFF

April 21

BIG SKY – The global pandemic spurred creativity over the past 10 months as businesses, organizations and people turned on a collective dime to adjust to a new COVID-19 world. As it was with Outlaw Partners and its newspaper, Explore Big Sky.

On March 30, EBS launched the Big Sky Virtual Town Hall series, an online forum featuring panelists of diverse backgrounds and involvements throughout the community. The team produced 16 sessions since and shows no signs of slowing in the new year.

The Town Hall saw some important conversations and some major players as panelists: Gov. Steve Bullock, Sens. Jon Tester and Steve Daines, science



writers David Quammen and Todd Wilkinson, CrossHarbor Capital Partners Managing Director Matt Kidd, Yellowstone National Park Superintendent Cam Sholly, Big Sky Resort President and CEO Taylor Middleton, and Gallatin County Health Officer Matt Kelley, among many others sat in on sessions.

In the inaugural installment, panelists fielded questions from both EBS Publisher Eric Ladd and Editor-in-Chief Joseph T. O'Connor as well as online audience members.

"We're trying to create a semblance of a communication channel that spans all the different community leaders," Ladd said.

The virtual town halls took place Monday evenings on two platforms: Facebook Live and Zoom. Many of the governing themes of surrounded COVID-19 and how various pockets of the Big Sky community and surrounding areas are reacting to the global crisis and its local ramifications.

Ladd said that while Outlaw Partners has always adopted the role of facilitating communication within the community, the current pandemic's dynamic nature presented an immediate opportunity to provide more COVID-19 coverage, a need articulated in an EBS community survey.

The fourth installment of EBS's virtual Town Hall meeting on April 20 brought key voices to the weekly conversation, kicking off the evening with Montana Gov. Steve Bullock.

The state executive joined the meeting in between conversations with business leaders, public health experts and others to determine the best way to roll out a phased reopening anticipated to begin April 25, the day following the termination of the governor's stay-at-home directive.

Bullock echoed statements he made in his own press conference last week, advising Montanans to reshape their expectations of what life outside of quarantine conditions will look like.

"Our new normal is going to look a lot different," he said. "The virus isn't going to go away, and we are going to have to adapt to how we are going to live with it for the next while."

Bullock stressed the importance of adequate testing availability and capacity in order to achieve progress toward recovery, an aim currently being conducted by Big Sky Relief. "We're working on it but as every governor will tell you, we need the federal government to be working with us, not against us."

How Big Sky's performing arts center responded to new barriers

BY MIRA BRODY

May 8

BIG SKY – The most unsettling thing about producing virtual shows, according to Warren Miller Performing Arts Center Executive Director John Zirkle, is ending them.

After a theater performance, you usually applaud, look around at your friends, family and neighbors, and filter into the lobby to grab a nightcap and revel in the energy of the evening. After a Zoom performance, Zirkle ends the meeting, the screen goes dark and there is silence.

This disconnect is the price being paid in order to do the very opposite—keep people connected during a time where theaters are forced to darken their stages and postpone and cancel performances. WMPAC, an artistic staple of the Big Sky community since it opened its doors in 2013, has grappled with adapting their marquee in an industry that usually thrives on bringing people together.

Zirkle, who is familiar with remote communication from working with artists and industry leaders around the country, reached out to friends and colleagues to see if they might be interested in his proposed adaptations. He cited his frustration toward the barrage of contrived corporate sympathy emails that went out after the pandemic began, feeling that they didn't do much to alleviate the issues people were facing. Instead, fueled by positive responses in the community, he devised a plan.

Despite the novel challenges brought about by the pandemic, the theater is adapting and has presented a handful of successful Zoom shows so far, including a poetry reading with Billy Collins, which gathered 250 people virtually, and a performance by the Portland Cello Project, which brought in over 500 viewers from all over the country.

After each show, attendees are encouraged to leave a token of their thoughts through a feedback form on WMPAC's website, and the outpouring of support has been phenomenal.

"I'm a critical care nurse, so this pandemic is technically what I signed up for years ago," said one commenter. "But it's the selflessness of artists who share their talents in an effort to buoy humanity that makes me tear up lately. Thank you. Thank you."

Zirkle referenced a recent article about musicians performing over the phone for patients in



For their winter 2020 season, WMPAC has found ways to adapt their offerings with virtual performances and limited in-person seating as well as an upgraded air filtration system. PHOTO BY MIRA BRODY

Intensive Care Units across the country, providing perhaps what is most needed these days: comfort.

"Now that we're in a world that exists in a binary of essential and nonessential workers," said Zirkle, "we have to ask ourselves, in our own lives 'Are the arts and the release from tragedy and crisis essential to me?"

He likens their virtual shows to parlor concerts, when people would attend intimate piano concerts in the musician's or a host's home. This negates the need for a venue, something Zirkle does struggle to accept. According to Zirkle, venues are what make these artistic experiences personal, and people care more about what's happening in their immediate community, an element the virtual world removes.

"This is just a room," he said in a Zoom interview with EBS on May 6 from the theater itself, gesturing to the empty rows of seats behind him. "It's the people in it that makes it special."

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Mountain biker stable after Big Sky grizzly bear attack

BY JOSEPH T. O'CONNOR

May 26

BIG SKY – On Memorial Day, a mountain biker was left in critical but stable condition at Billings Clinic trauma center after a grizzly bear attack in Big Sky, Montana.

Gallatin County officials received a report at approximately 1:10 p.m. on Memorial Day that Peter Scherfig, a male Big Sky resident in his 60s who was riding alone, had been attacked by a bear on the Fish Camp Trail in the Spanish Peaks Mountain Club community west of Big Sky.

"It looks like a surprise encounter," said Morgan Jacobsen, spokesperson for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. "This kind of behavior is normal for grizzly bears."

Following the attack, the victim crawled up to South Fork Road where Joe Jacobs found him on his way to the Yellowstone Club.

"I saw [the biker] was sitting down in a cross-legged position ... and thought they were just somebody actually taking a break having some water," said Jacobs, a finish carpenter who lives in Bozeman. "As I got closer they put their arms up and I could see ... that his arms were bloody and there was something not quite right."

When Jacobs pulled over he saw the victim was badly injured and called 911. Unable to speak, the biker tried to communicate what happened by writing in the gravel along the road so Jacobs grabbed a pad of paper and a pen. "He wrote, 'Bear," Jacobs said. "Then he wrote, 'Can't breathe."

Big Sky Fire Department first responders transported the injured biker to the Big Sky Medical Center where they rendezvoused with a life flight helicopter that flew the victim to Billings Clinic trauma center where he is being treated for lacerations and puncture wounds to the face and back, according to Jacobsen.



FWP Region 3 Game Warden Brian Lloyd (R) begins his investigation of a grizzly bear attack on Memorial Day in Big Sky, Montana. OUTLAW PARTNERS PHOTO

Officers from the Gallatin County Sheriff's Office and state FWP officials found the bike on the Fish Camp Trail, which connects to both Yellow Mule and the popular Ousel Falls trails. Fish Camp is temporarily closed to the public and other trails are being monitored.

The bear has not been located. FWP is currently investigating

the incident and is deeming the grizzly "non-predatory" at this time and not actively searching the area, Jacobsen said. Louise Astbury, general manager for Spanish Peaks Mountain Club, released a statement saying that authorities and first responders acted quickly and delivered the patient to definitive care. "Our thoughts and prayers are with the individual and his family for a full recovery," Astbury said in the release.

Brian Lloyd, FWP's Region 3 game warden, said this is the first incident involving a human-bear conflict in Big Sky this year and is urging area residents and visitors to exercise caution in the field.

"This is a reminder to be extra cautious when you're out there [and] carry bear spray," Lloyd said at the scene following the attack, adding that hikers and bikers should not venture out alone and should pay attention to signs including the smell of dead carcasses or birds in an area.

Joe Jacobs agreed. "You're not at the top of the food chain out here," he said.



COVID-19 grounds Montana's toughest communities

BY MIRA BRODY

June 4

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK – Through some of the harshest conditions in the lower 48, the Yellowstone bison herd has thrived since prehistory, outdating Lewis and Clark, Christopher Columbus, even the Ice Age.

A similar resilience applies to the Montana communities—Cooke City, Gardiner and West Yellowstone—that serve as gateways to the nation's first national park, which attracts over 4 million visitors a year.



The Historic Madison Hotel in West Yellowstone communicates a heartfelt community message on the park's opening day on June 1. PHOTO BY MIRA BRODY

The challenge this year, however, is not due to extreme weather or time. To blame is the same enigmatic virus that has crippled well-resourced cities, precipitated the highest unemployment rate since the Great Depression, and claimed the lives of more than 300,000 Americans to date.

Recreationists across the country, motivated by the same urge to escape as the rest of us, are seeking solitude in open spaces. In late April, Gov. Steve Bullock said Montana has seen the lowest number of COVID-19 cases per capita in the country, a statistic he credits to swift action in issuing stay-at-home orders in March, before even much higherpopulated states chose to do so.

Wyoming's South and Southeast entrances of Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks opened May 18 to a flood of visitors baring a wide variety of license plates. Even with only the two Wyoming entrances accessible, visitation through the East and South entrances on Memorial Day weekend were 97 percent of normal with a total of 4,686 vehicles entering the park, according to a May 26 National Park Service statement.





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Bullock announced at a May 28 press conference that he was working with park Superintendent Cam Sholly to reopen the North, Northeast and West entrances to the park on June 1, the same day the state's 14-day travel quarantine expired. Over the summer, health officials scrambled to prepare as people from across the country packed camping gear, filled gas tanks and headed to the mountains.

"It wasn't as robust as past years but the fact that we had an opening day on June 1 is really encouraging," said Katrina Wiese, president of the West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce, of opening day traffic. "I think we all kind of expected a slower season."

According to a park news release, vehicle traffic entering the Montana entrances on June 1 and 2 was 45 percent of the same days in 2019. Wiese says a variety of factors contributed, including that tour buses were not part of the park's first phase of reopening, but that they saw reservations increase since the governor's announcement.

"Our town is 100 percent tourism based; the community is extremely dependent on it," Wiese said. "I know a lot of businesses have put a lot of money into reopening safely for both visitors and residents."

Randa Hulett purchased Seldom Seen Knives and Gifts in West Yellowstone in 2000 with her husband Stephen. They have been residents of West Yellowstone since 1972. "I haven't seen anything like this since the fire of '88," Hulett said. "And maybe the day after 9/11 ... It's going to be a very strange year."

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Locals question Big Sky's imperfect evacuation routes

BY BELLA BUTLER

June 18

BIG SKY – In the face of a serious emergency such as a large wildfire or earthquake in a small mountain town with one legitimate access and egress point, how would residents escape?

Big Sky, Montana, a paradisal escape for many, lacks an adequate plan for its residents' own emergency escape, according to community members. Montana Highway 64, which intersects with U.S. Highway 191, offers a twolane passage that exits and enters Big Sky and dead ends to the public at Moonlight Basin. One group of community members last spring sent a letter of concern to Gov. Steve Bullock.



Jack Creek road may be the solution to Big Sky's imperfect evacuation plan. OUTLAW PARTNERS PHOTO

A town bisected by county lines, Big Sky is unique in that it is an unincorporated census-designated place that covers ground in both Gallatin County and Madison County. According to the Big Sky Owners Association's letter to the governor, the absence of local governance and the county border have left the mountain town utopia at the whim of a generalized county protocol.

"There is no precedent or authorized legal structure for the two counties to jointly create and/or administer a single, coordinated evacuation plan for our community," the letter reads.

That doesn't mean there's no plan, it just isn't clear what Big Sky residents should do in the face of a disaster should it block egress on U.S. 191. The Gallatin County Emergency Plan does not present explicit options for egress but rather appoints the county sheriff, currently Brian Gootkin, to make the call on evacuation routes during an emergency. "I think with the current [pandemic] situation, people are beginning to see the value in preparing for emergencies," said Gallatin County Commission Chair Don Seifert. The community is wondering what entity will take that initiative.

Based on traffic counts and other community metrics, local officials estimate that Big Sky occupancy can range from 10,000-20,000 people during peak seasons, including residents and visitors. Jammed between a potential flood or fire and a dead end, where would this horde of evacuees turn?

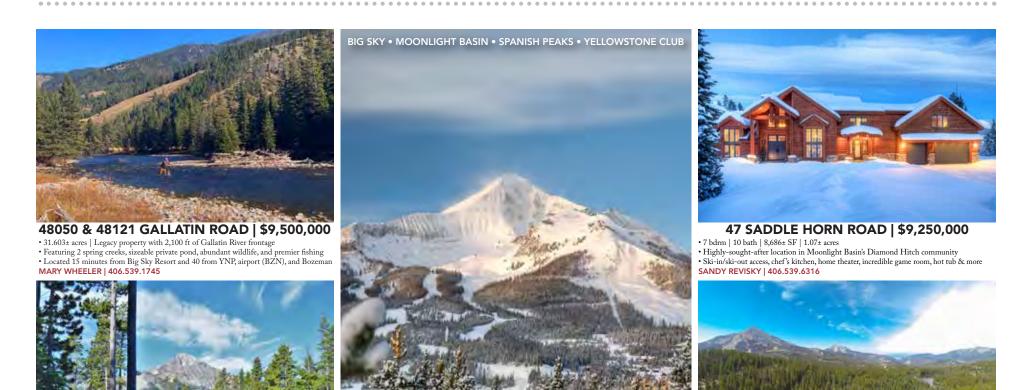
One answer may be at the end of MT 64, where the pavement turns

to dirt and a gate marks the entrance to Jack Creek Road, a private Moonlight Basin asset. "It's the elephant in the room that the only other way out of Big Sky is going to be through Jack Creek," said Eric Ossorio, chairman for BSOA Chairman.

But Jack Creek, in its current condition, can only reasonably function as a one-way road in an emergency scenario, say community members along with Gallatin and Madison county commissioners. The problem, according to Madison Commissioner Jim Hart, is funding.

On June 14, a small wildfire burned through a chunk of forest approximately 3 miles south of the U.S. 191 and MT 64 junction, and on March 31, a 6.5 magnitude earthquake in Challis, Idaho rattled Big Sky.

These recent events serve as a reminder that disaster and potential emergencies are possible, and with the global pandemic shining a spotlight on the importance of taking preventative rather than reactive measures to cope with community crisis, Big Sky's egress dilemma is a rising priority.





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The day the music died

BY TOM MARINO

August 12

On any given night, winter or summer, Big Sky establishments offered a wide variety of live music. From solo crooners playing favorite covers to original alternative bands like Dammit Lauren and the Well; from up top to down the canyon, it was easy to find live music.

That all changed March 15, 2020 when Big Sky Resort announced it was closing and the county soon followed by closing all bars and restaurants. While some establishments have started to offer a smattering of live music, it's currently far from the good old days.

EBS sat down with Brian Stumpf from Dammit Lauren and the Well to get a sense of what it's like to be a working musician in these unprecedented times.

Tom Marino: Between your gigs with the band and your various solo and duo dates, how many gigs were you playing a year before COVID-19?

Brian Stumpf: In the winter with ski season, I'm playing at least five times a week. In the summer, the last couple of years, three or four times a week at least. That was my career, it's all over now. (laughs)

T.M.: How are the streaming gigs going? It's a relatively new way to perform in our digital world. What are the pros and cons?

B.S.: It was so cool in April then it got nice out. People were super generous [but] it's not the same. I think YouTube livestream stuff I have been seeing is not as popular as it once was. ... It has lost its luster a little bit. People want to go to a real show now.

T.M.: As the primary booking agent for the band, what kind of feedback are you getting from managers and owners who book live music?

B.S.: No one knows. We got the Pine Creek [Lodge] gig because we had been working on a run through Red Lodge. It was mellow. That was the first week of July. That was when things were still calm. We ended up getting cancelled at Snow Creek [in Red Lodge] ... Whitefish and Sandpoint.

T.M.: It sounds like you guys have been busy writing new material. How many new songs have you written since March and what have you been inspired by in these times? **B.S.:** The focus right now for the band is to write. I think we have six new songs. Four of



Brian Hurlburt of Dammit Lauren and the Well switched to virtual gigs after everything closed in March 2020. OUTLAW PARTNERS PHOTO

those have been written in lock down. We need to get another five or six tunes and go into the studio.

T.M.: What is your favorite chorus in the new batch of songs?

B.S.: Lauren wanted to call this tune "Electric Restlessness." And I thought that was too much of a tongue twister to have as a chorus. Somehow, she made it sound super cool and perfect for the chorus.

T.M.: I recently played a gig and folks were telling me how good it was to hear live music again. Do you see the live music scene coming back stronger than ever post COVID-19?

B.S.: I have no idea when. One thing I have kind of noticed is [live music] does mean a lot to people. People tend to slash the entertainment budget first. And that may well still be the case but I think for those that are willing to invest in it, as they get the go ahead, people will show up.

T.M.: How many days did you ski last winter?

B.S.: I'm going to plead the fifth on that one. I have a reputation to uphold. (laughs)

Bridger Foothills Fire rages near 'M' trail

BY BRANDON WALKER

September 5

BOZEMAN – A wildfire started near Bozeman in the Bridger Mountains on the afternoon of Sept. 4. The Bridger Foothills Fire was first reported at approximately 3:30 p.m. approximately two-and-a-half miles from the Bridger Foothills trail near the "M."

As of 8:30 a.m. on Sept. 5, the fire was 0 percent contained and flames had engulfed roughly 400 acres as the fire actively burned in timber. Authorities said the fire started when high winds ignited a tree smoldering from a lightning strike days earlier.



airtankers and at least one additional helicopter are assisting with the Bridger Foothills Fire.

The following trail closures are in effect due to the blaze: Middle Cottonwood, Bridger Ridge, Bridger Foothills, Sypes Canyon, "M" trail, Bridger Bowl to the Ridge, Pine Creek and Drinking Horse.

"All trails from Middle Cottonwood, all the way up to Saddle Peak and then tying in over the ridge to Bridger Bowl's southern boundary and running south all the way down to the 'M.' All of those trails are closed," Leuschen-Lonergan said.

Highway 86 was closed to the public and open for only resident travel from the Story Mill and Bridger Canyon Road intersection, continuing along Bridger Canyon Road to the Kelly Canyon Road intersection.

"This morning there is some smoke in the air, but it's not as active yet," said Mariah Leuschen-Lonergan, public information officer for the Bridger Foothills Fire. "It's on both the east and the west side and the majority of resources are anchored in and doing structure protection and digging line on the eastern side."

PHOTO BY BRANDON WALKER

"We're also asking people not travel that paved pathway along the Bridger Canyon Road. That is in the closure area and we really have quite a bit of activity going on that we need first responders have less congestion," Leuschen-Lonergan said, noting that from 12 p.m. to 12 a.m. on Sept. 5 a red flag warning was in effect. The U.S. Forest Service expected 10-15 mph winds throughout the day, gusting to as high as 25 mph at times.

More than 100 personnel are on site with at

least 10 aircrafts combatting the fire, aided by smokejumpers and firefighters on the ground. Air crews dropped both water and fire retardant to slow the spread. On Sept. 4, first responders cleared the area and ensured that no recreationists remained on the scene.

"The Midnight Sun Hotshots are on the line and one additional Type 2 handcrew is on the line and then multiple crews are supposed to be arriving this morning as well," Leuschen-Lonergan said on Sept. 5.

In addition to four helicopters, four single-engine airtankers, two larger

On the evening of Sept. 4, the fire had scorched roughly 80 acres, but expanded by more than four times in size overnight.

During the Bridger Foothills Fire, the Gallatin County Sheriff's Office evacuated 728 residences and 1,674 people. At its height, 373 personnel responded to the blaze, 68 structures were lost and three firefighters sustained injuries. The fire torched more than 8,224 acres.

Lady Big Horns conclude historic season

BY BRANDON WALKER

November 12

CHARLO, Montana. – On the road for a match for the fourth time in seven days, the Lone Peak High School Lady Big Horns faced the Charlo Vikings on Nov. 9 with the victor punching their ticket to the state volleyball tournament. The Vikings surfaced victorious following a competitive match, winning three sets to one—25-19, 26-24, 18-25 and 25-21—ending the Lady Big Horns' season.

"I think if we played them again, we'd win and then they'd win the next one and we'd probably go back and forth for a long time," said LPHS Head Coach Missy Botha. "It was very evenly matched."

In their final game in a Lone Peak uniform, seniors Hannah Dreisbach, Ivy Hicks and Chloe Hammond all led the team in one statistical category. Dreisbach paced LPHS with her nine kills in the match, Hicks pitched in 26 assists, and Hammond added 22 digs. Junior TJ Nordahl made her presence known at the net, leading the Lady Big Horns with four blocks against the Vikings, while sophomore Maddie Cone found her touch serving the ball, accounting for five of the team's 13 aces.

"Even though they lost it was one of those games where you come off the court knowing that you've put it all out there [and] you've played your best," Botha said.

LPHS came into the contest with Charlo having fallen to Manhattan Christian in straight sets on Nov. 7 in the Western Class-C divisional volleyball tournament championship, while Charlo advanced to face Lone Peak by defeating Hot Springs in straight sets that same evening.

The Lady Big Horns season was historic with the team advancing farther in the postseason than any other volleyball team in Lone Peak history, and they did so having previously dealt with a pause of their season due to a two-week COVID-19 quarantine. LPHS concluded the regular season with a nearly flawless 11-1 record, highlighted by a victory over rival Gardiner—the team's first victory against the Bruins in four years—with the lone blemish coming after the two-week layoff at the hands of Manhattan Christian.



LPHS placed third at both the district and divisional volleyball tournaments this season making them the most successful volleyball team in Lone Peak history. PHOTO BY MICHELLE HORNING

After a busy postseason schedule, Lone Peak concluded the year with a 15-4 overall record and third place finishes at both the district and divisional tournaments. The Lady Big Horns will graduate six athletes from this season's team—Dreisbach, Hicks, Hammond, Reilly Germain, Nadia Benjdid and Ruth Blodgett.

"It was tough because these seniors, you know, they gifted me with this historic season and gave me some of the best times of my life," Botha said of watching the six LPHS seniors leave the court one last time.

Botha continued to thank LPHS Athletic Director John Hannahs, her coaching staff including, Kara Blodgett, Krisy Hammond and Bailey Dowd and the parents of the athletes for their continued support throughout the season.

"It has been unbelievable seeing them grow into such great competitors," Botha said of the seniors. "But not only that, wonderful young ladies."

Tester introduces Montana Headwaters Legacy Act

BY BRANDON WALKER, GABRIELLE GASSER AND MIRA BRODY

December 1

GALLATIN GATEWAY – In the Lakota Tribe, the phrase "Mní wičhóni" means "Water is life." Montana Sen. Jon Tester embraced this quote on Oct. 27 as he introduced the monumental Montana Headwaters Legacy Act from the TroutChasers and Fly Fishing Outfitters Lodge in Gallatin Gateway on the banks of the Gallatin River.

On Dec. 1, Tester introduced the landmark waterway protection act to the U.S. Senate.

Surrounded by representatives from the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, American Rivers and American Whitewaters and a crowd of about 20, Tester spoke about the act, a piece of new legislation that would protect 336 river miles in the Custer-Gallatin and the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forests, including the Gallatin,



Madison and Smith rivers. It is the most significant wild and scenic designation in nearly 45 years.

"The bottom line is, if you can hear the water running behind us, that's what it's all about,"Tester said.

Among the organizations present, all spoke of the unifying power rivers have in Montana culture—they are a place to recreate, seek peace from a fast-paced life, enjoy the company of family, and pass down to the next generation.

"It's a real monumental moment and it just makes me proud as a Montanan to see this next step, and also incredibly appreciative of Senator Tester for his vision and his leadership to protect these incredible resources in Montana," said Charles Drimal, waters program coordinator with the Greater Yellowstone Coalition. Drimal noted that protecting Montana's iconic rivers protect three key components: the economy, environment and quality of life.

Kascie Herron, associate director of outreach and communications for the American Rivers Northern Rockies Office, was also pleased with the announcement. "Today is the biggest day I've had since I started working in American Rivers," Herron said. "It's like all of our hard work is actually going to pay off."

On Tuesday, Oct. 27, Senator John Tester announced that he will sponsor the Montana Headwaters Legacy Act, the culmination of 10 years of work by many different organizations in Montana. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER

The Montana Headwaters Legacy Act has been in development for the last decade, led by a collaborative effort called Montanans for Healthy Rivers. According to healthyriversmt.org, more than 1,000 businesses and three times that amount of residents support Montanans for Healthy Rivers. If passed, the identified waterways would receive coveted classification as Wild and Scenic Rivers.

"We're not to the finish line yet, but this is a crucial milestone and one that we've been working toward for a decade," said Scott Bosse, Northern Rockies director of American Rivers. "So, we're extremely pleased about it and we hope the other members of our congressional delegation will join Senator Tester in this effort."

More than 50 years ago, Congress established the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System and in March of 2019 the system has already provided conservation protections for more than 225 rivers throughout the U.S.

First COVID-19 vaccines administered at Big Sky Medical Center

December 23

BY BELLA BUTLER AND MIRA BRODY

BIG SKY – On the top floor of the Bozeman Health Big Sky Medical Center in a closed off hallway, three nurses received the hospital's first doses of the long-awaited Moderna COVID-19 vaccine on Dec. 23.

"We've just been waiting for this," said Kelly Reynolds, one of the first Medical Center nurses to receive the vaccine, which received emergency use authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Dec. 18. "Obviously this year has been horrible for everyone in our community. It's scary. And I think this is the first step to getting back to some normalcy."

Big Sky Medical Center was allotted 100 Moderna vaccine doses for the first round, enough to vaccinate the entire staff. Similar to the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, which was given FDA emergency use authorization on Dec. 11 and administered to staff at Bozeman Health Deaconess Hospital on Dec. 14, the Moderna vaccine requires two doses, spaced 28 days apart.



Ody Loomis is the first person in Big Sky to receive a dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER

"I didn't even feel it," one of the nurses said with a smile after receiving the longanticipated shot.

The rest of the Medical Center staff will receive the first dose of the vaccine over the next few days, said Lauren Brendel, system director of marketing and communications for Bozeman Health and public information officer for the Bozeman Health Incident Command team.

Bozeman Health Deaconess Hospital, Bozeman Health's flagship facility, received 800 doses of the Moderna vaccine today to inoculate the remaining healthcare workers in the Bozeman Health system who were not vaccinated with the previously distributed Pfizer vaccine, of which Bozeman Health received 975 doses.

On the same day that the first round of vaccines were administered at the Big Sky Medical Center, the Gallatin City-County Health Department unwrapped its own package of 300 Moderna COVID-19 vaccine doses. The Health Department is currently working with county health officials to distribute these doses to frontline healthcare workers outside of the Bozeman Health Network, including those working in smaller county clinics, long-

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term care facilities, and home health agencies as well as school nurses.

Gallatin City-County Health Department Health Officer Matt Kelley said in a Dec. 23 virtual press conference that they are distributing the vaccine with three primary goals in mind: safety, timeliness and transparency.

"Frankly, to see that vaccine come out of the box today, I don't think there was anyone in the room that didn't have goosebumps and there might have been a few tears here and there, or at least strong-willed people trying to hold back tears," Kelley said. "I think when you've gone through something like we've gone through—as a community, as a nation, as a world—to be able to see innovation and see those vaccines roll across the threshold is really pretty special."

Kelley noted that although a vaccine is now available, the communities in Gallatin County still need to follow guidelines published by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The best way to honor and thank those on the frontlines, he said, is to wear masks, wash your hands, keep your distance and stay home if you're sick.

On the Zoom screen, he motioned to a row of cards along his office window, notes of gratitude from the community for the Health Department's hard work during the pandemic.

"If people really want to honor the healthcare providers who are out there putting it all on the line, if they want to support public health, what we would really like them to do is to help us reduce transmission, because it's really making a difference."



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