

ExploreTM

Life and land from the heart of the Yellowstone Region

FREE

Big Sky

July 2 - 15, 2021
Volume 12 // Issue #14

**Shrinking workforce,
limited hours**

Fourth of July Guide

Big Sky firework ban

**Big Sky Chamber
honors businesses**

*Search and Rescue dogs sniff
out the lost*



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ON THE COVER:

The Soldiers Chapel rests in the shadow of Lone Mountain with lines of flags on either side. The flags are put up each year to observe Memorial Day and now serve as a beautiful reminder ahead of Independence Day. Fourth of July in Big Sky is a sun-filled weekend of barbecues, live music, a 5k race, the Firecracker Open golf tournament, ziplining, mountain biking and so much more. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OPINION.....	4	BUSINESS	33
LOCAL NEWS BRIEFS.....	6	ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT.....	36
LOCAL.....	7	DINING.....	44
ENVIRONMENT & OUTDOORS.....	17	FUN.....	45
HEALTH.....	25	BIG SKY'S BIGGEST WEEK.....	49
SPORTS.....	26		

7

Fourth of July Guide

Whether it's music in the park with a picnic blanket and some friends or a quick 5K run, there are a plethora of activities in Big Sky during Fourth of July weekend. We've put together a comprehensive guide for your holiday so you don't miss out.

8

Big Sky firework ban

Following strong community appeal, the Gallatin and Madison counties issued firework bans on July 30. The Gallatin County ban only applies to the Big Sky and West Yellowstone areas, and the Madison County ban is county wide. Though the sky will remain dark in Big Sky on July Fourth, community events, including Music in the Mountains, will keep the holiday lively.

15

Shrinking workforce, limited hours

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, local businesses are finally fully open again, but many still have to operate at reduced capacity and limited hours due to staffing shortages. Recent growth in Big Sky has caused a housing shortage that business owners say has impacted their ability to hire enough staff.

18

Search and Rescue dogs sniff out the lost

The Western Montana Search Dogs are tasked with an important job—finding those who are reported lost by the Gallatin County Sheriff's Office. To hone their skills, handlers and dogs rigorously practice, sometimes twice a week.

33

Big Sky Chamber honors businesses

On the evening of June 22, the Big Sky Chamber of Commerce handed out five awards to businesses and individuals in the Big Sky community at the 24th annual Black Diamond Business Awards Dinner. The celebration featured speeches from new Chamber CEO Brad Niva along with Chamber board chair Scott Johnson and the evening wrapped with an address from keynote speaker Chantel Schieffer on eight leadership lessons.

Opening Shot



Summertime is the perfect season to hike to Bear Basin the Madison Range and soak in the high altitude mountain air, wildflowers and solitude. PHOTO BY BELLA BUTLER

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EDITORIAL POLICY

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25 TOWN CENTER AVENUE | 145 TOWN CENTER AVENUE | 66 MOUNTAIN LOOP ROAD | 181 CLUBHOUSE FORK



How do you enjoy celebrating the Fourth of July?



Julia Baldrig | *Nashville, Tennessee*

"We do big family reunions on a lake. We have somebody designated to do fireworks, everybody brings food, we laugh a lot and we drink a lot and have a really good time."



Jonathan Kwart | *Bozeman, MT*

"I like spending the Fourth on the water somewhere. I like to be either rafting or floating."



Kathy Kistler | *Tiffin, Ohio*

"We like to take our kids to watch fireworks, usually just get together with a big group of friends and watch from someone's backyard."



Craig Haughton | *Atlanta, Georgia*

"Gathered together with family. Definitely like to have some fantastic food, some fantastic beverages and a lot of explosives."

PREVENTION IS KEY. CLEAN.DRAIN.DRY.

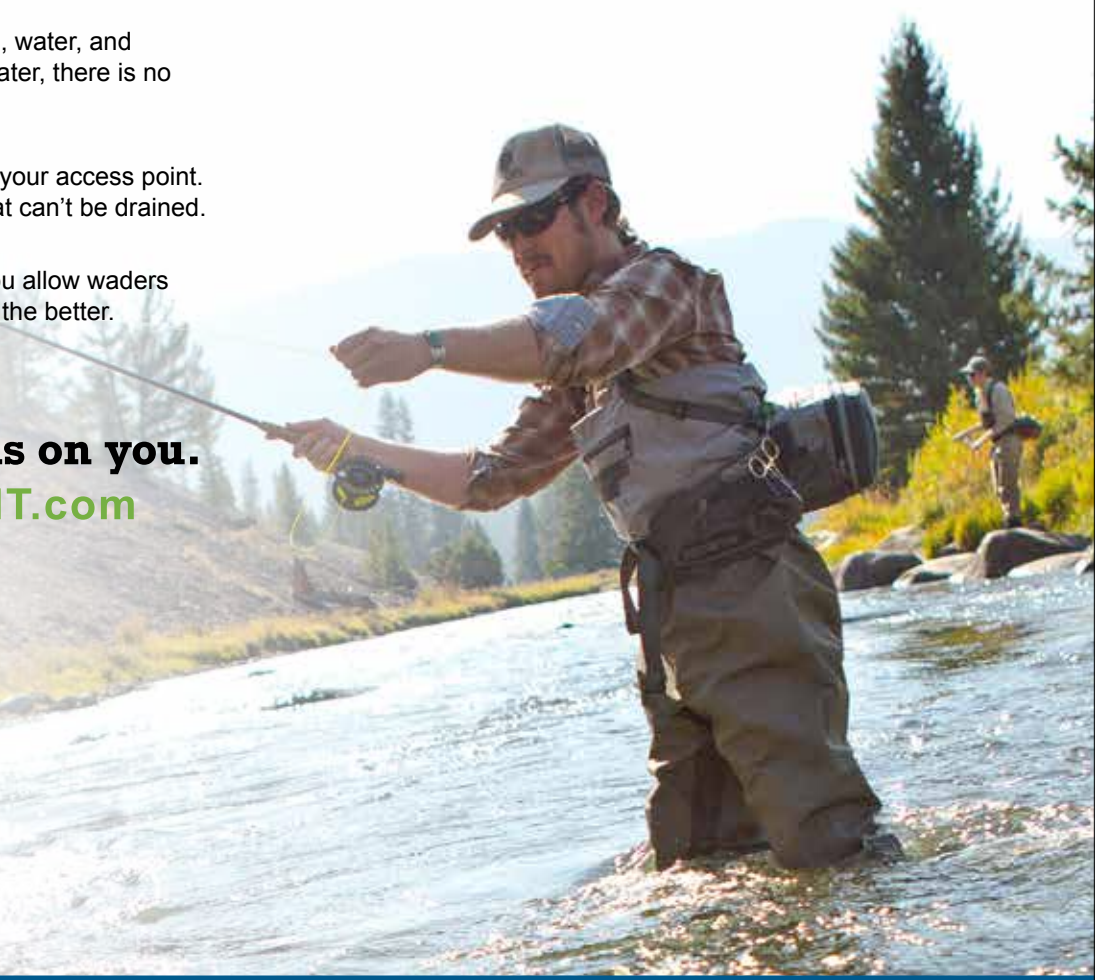


Clean your gear and watercraft. Remove mud, water, and vegetation after every trip. Use a brush and water, there is no need for chemicals.

Drain water from your boat and equipment at your access point. Pull the drain plug. Use a sponge for items that can't be drained.

Dry your equipment thoroughly. The longer you allow waders and other equipment to dry out between trips, the better.

The health of the Gallatin depends on you.
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BETTER TOGETHER

A biweekly District bulletin

BIG SKY RESORT AREA DISTRICT

Annual Report Snapshot Fiscal Year 2020

July 2019 - June 2020

It feels good to be looking at 2020 in the rear-view mirror – a year for the history books! So much happened between July 2019 through June 2020 and we are proud to share our inaugural Annual Report with you. The impact of Resort Tax funds is embodied in this report. Our efforts are rooted in the core “pillars” of the District’s Strategic Plan: **Strategic Investments; Engage our Community;** and **Culture of Excellence**. As a local government, we have a fiduciary responsibility to fairly collect public funds and make responsible investments for the well-being of our community.

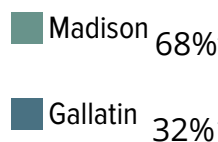
View the complete Annual Report at:
ResortTax.org

Check your mail box or request a physical copy from our office:
406.995.3234 or Info@ResortTax.org

FY20 Collections: **\$7,533,344**

Did You Know...?
Big Sky surpassed Billings as the largest collector of State Lodging Tax.

Collections by County



FY20 MILESTONES

ORDINANCE 98-01

Increased collection and compliance through overhaul of Ordinance 98-01. Subsequent increased collections on alcohol, tobacco, and short-term rentals.



BIG SKY RESORT AREA DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN

Approved inaugural Strategic Plan for FY21-FY23 – charting the path forward for District focus.



OUR BIG SKY: COMMUNITY VISION & STRATEGY

Created by the community for the community through over a year of public involvement, the Vision helps to guide and provide direction to Big Sky.



COORDINATING COUNCIL OF BIG SKY

Collaborative formed to ensure the implementation of the Community Vision & Strategy plan for the “greater good” of Big Sky.



BIG SKY RELIEF

In response to the pandemic, Resort Tax and Community Foundations partnered to create the Big Sky Relief Fund, establishing programs and services to support our community.



1% FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Voters of the District approved the additional 1% Resort Tax – made possible through District efforts in Helena. The funds are earmarked for up to \$27M for a Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade and \$12M for a connection to the recently formed Canyon Water & Sewer District.

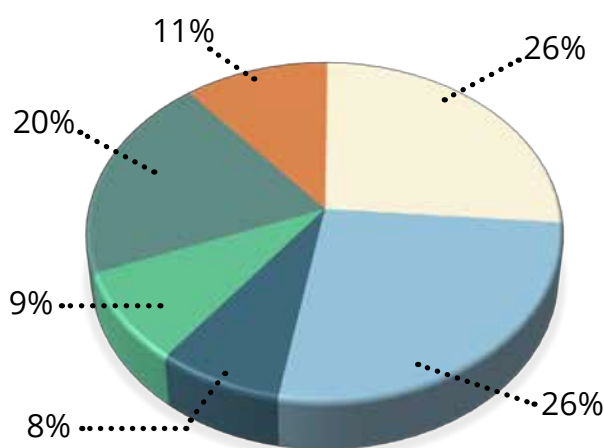


73 Projects Awarded Funding

27 Sponsoring Organizations

Total Committed Funds = **\$10,256,075***

*Committed funds do not reflect expenses incurred in FY20.



- ▲ Community Development & Social Services
- ▲ Economic Development
- ▲ Housing
- ▲ Infrastructure
- ▲ Public Health & Safety
- ▲ Recreation & Conservation



Administered by the Big Sky Resort Area District, Resort Tax is a 4% tax on luxury goods & services.

OUR VISION: “Big Sky is BETTER TOGETHER as a result of wise investments, an engaged community, and the pursuit of excellence.”

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Fishing restriction in place for lower Madison River

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS

THREE FORKS – A daily fishing restriction is in place, effective immediately, for the lower Madison River to reduce fish stress and mortality during high water temperatures.

The hoot-owl fishing restriction, which prohibits fishing each day between 2 p.m. and midnight, applies from the dam at Ennis Lake downstream to the Madison River's confluence with the Jefferson River at Missouri Headwaters State Park. Water temperatures in the lower Madison have exceeded 75 degrees each day since June 21, meeting the criteria for hoot-owl restrictions.

This restriction and its boundaries from Ennis dam to the confluence with the Jefferson River will be in place through the end of the lower Madison's permanent hoot-owl restriction, which is in effect each year from July 15 through Aug. 15.

FWP staff have expanded the hoot-owl restriction up to the dam due to whitefish and trout mortality observed last month between the dam and the Warm Springs Boat Launch. Testing of the dead fish found the mortality stemmed from irritated gills, but a causative agent was not determined.

FWP staff have received reports of brown trout with saprolegnia infections after the initial fish kill. Saprolegnia is a white, cotton-like fungus that can kill fish in certain conditions. Subsequent sampling efforts confirmed the presence of saprolegnia in several brown trout captured in Bear Trap Canyon. This also factored into the decision to expand the hoot-owl restriction.

Fishery managers have also seen overall declines in brown trout numbers in the Madison River, where the brown trout population is estimated at 50 percent of the 20-year average. Additional waters have seen low flows and high water temperatures recently because of low snowpack and little precipitation. A full fishing closure was established for the Ruby River on June 17 to protect fish during this season of stressful conditions.

Water and Sewer board to seek public feedback on annexation

EBS STAFF

BIG SKY – At a June 22 board meeting, in their discussion of whether to add new workforce housing lots into the Big Sky County Water and Sewer District, the district board elected to involve the public in the decision through a survey and public hearing.

In January 2021, the old American Bank and adjacent lots were purchased by Lone Mountain Land Company for future workforce housing developments to be completed in partnership with the Big Sky Community Housing Trust.

The lots are currently outside of the water and sewer district and the housing trust applied in April for annexation. On the first reading of the ordinance, the board decided to solicit public feedback on the decision. The district plans to distribute a survey and hold a public hearing on the issue prior to their July 20 meeting, when the final board vote on the annexation is scheduled.

Len Hill Park in Town Center welcomes community

BIG SKY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

BIG SKY – The Big Sky Community Organization is excited to announce the opening of Len Hill Park in Town Center on Saturday, July 3. Thanks to the generosity of The Leonard Hill Charitable Trust, Patricia Gordon, MD, in-kind support from the Simkins family and 15 additional donors, BSCO was able to secure 3.3 acres in the heart of Big Sky on behalf of the community in the winter of 2018.

The Len Hill Park, formally known as the Town Center Park, and home to the Arts Council of Big Sky's Music in the Mountains concert series, has been a treasured open space for all in Big Sky. Improvements to the park began in May 2020 which includes: re-grading the park to help with drainage issues and improve seating with an amphitheater style layout; planters installed on Ousel Falls Drive to help protect park goers from traffic; permanent bike racks; additional trash receptacles; and added gravel in front of the stage to reduce damage to the grass.

“As Big Sky reopens after the pandemic, the Len Hill Park will be a much-utilized open space!” said Whitney Montgomery, BSCO CEO. “It will be fabulous to have the park available for concerts, picnics and general use. We are grateful to the Leonard Hill Charitable Trust and Dr. Patricia Gordon, the Simkins Family along with many others, for their generosity in bringing this park to our community.”

Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport to participate in fight against human trafficking

BOZEMAN YELLOWSTONE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

BELGRADE – Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport announces its participation in a global research collaboration spearheaded by United Against Slavery to fight human trafficking via the 2021 National Outreach Survey for Transportation. Over 100 contributors including 59 oversight agencies from Canada, Brazil, the Netherlands and the USA will analyze frontline data from the aviation, maritime, pipeline, railroad, roadway and public transit agencies in an effort to craft policies and solutions to disrupt this criminal activity and ultimately make it difficult, unattractive and unprofitable.

In 2020, United Against Slavery became the first-ever recipient of the USDOT Combating Human Trafficking in Transportation Impact Award. Christi Wigle, Co-Founder and CEO stated, “The National Outreach Survey for Transportation project will launch July 5, 2021 and be open to our collaboration partners for sixty days. The survey tool is designed to collect frontline data on all types of human trafficking to inform research, programming, evaluation and other functions of the counter-trafficking community. The aggregate findings and data analysis will be completed and disseminated by April 2022 and will guide the collaboration team in crafting global solutions that can help save lives. Our collaborative data collection efforts at United Against Slavery is to help victims be freed from enslavement and to empower survivors with the resources needed in their healing journeys.”

“This crime happens everywhere, even in Montana. As a growing airport, we want to be ahead of the issue,” Airport Director Brian Sprenger said. “We will encourage the more than 1,100 people that are employed here at the airport to help inform new legislative policies and future trainings on human trafficking by taking this survey.”

To learn more about United Against Slavery and the NOST project, visit <http://www.unitedagainstsavery.org/> or contact UAS at research@unitedagainstsavery.org.

A Guide to Big Sky's Fourth of July

BY MIRA BRODY

BIG SKY – For many, spending the Fourth of July in Big Sky is an unbreakable tradition. Whether it's the live music, warm weather, mountain biking, ziplining or fireworks in past years, there's just something about celebrating our country's independence under the shadow of Lone Mountain. EBS has put together a comprehensive guide for your Fourth of July weekend so you don't miss out.

Music in the Mountains

The Arts Council of Big Sky is once again hosting their Fourth of July Music in the Mountains free concert series. The weekend will kick off on Saturday, July 3 with Steep Canyon Rangers, the band comedian Steve Martin famously plays banjo in, and conclude on July 4 with the Tiny Band. Due to high fire danger, the Arts Council has decided to forgo their annual fireworks show this year.

Firecracker Open

On July 4, Big Sky Resort is hosting the Firecracker Open at the Big Sky Resort Golf Course benefiting the Folds of Honor Foundation. Folds of Honor provides educational scholarships to the children and spouses of fallen and disabled service members. Entry fee includes 18 holes, a cart, practice balls, lunch during golfing, flag prizes and awards, and a player gift. Call the golf shop at (406) 995-5780 to register.

The resort will also be open for the usual family-friendly activities—scenic chairlift rides, biking, hiking, Lone Peak Expeditions and zipline.

Fourth of July 5K

The Big Sky Community Organization is hosting the Fourth of July 5K race at the Big Sky Community Park starting at 8:30 a.m. BSCO encourages participants to bring their friends and family, wear costumes and enjoy the local trails Big Sky has to offer.



LPHS students attend American Legion Boys and Girls State

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

HELENA – Last month, six Lone Peak High School students traveled to Montana's capital city of Helena for American Legion Boys State and American Legion Auxiliary Girls State.

The six delegates participated in a variety of activities in June to learn about all levels of government. Activities included elections, city and county meetings, legislative sessions and other events meant to engage students in the governmental process.

This was the sixth year LPHS students attended the weeklong event, the girls from June 13-19 and the boys from June 6-11 at Carroll College in Helena. Each year, middle school and high school social studies teacher Tony Coppola chooses students based on classroom performance, interest in political science and government, and aptitude for leadership.

Coppola explained that once he picks the students, American Legion Post 99 of Big Sky pays the tuition for them to attend each year.

"The American Legion Boys and Girls State programs are an excellent opportunity for LPHS students to expand upon their understanding of the political and government systems," said Coppola, adding his appreciation to Post 99 for supporting the program. "The weeklong experiential learning experience allows them to meet new peers, which exposes them to new and different perspectives. They also sit in on speeches and meet current Montana governmental leaders."



For the boys, Tony Brester (left), Luke Kirchmayr (center) and John Chadwell (right) went to Helena June 6-11 to participate in the State experience. PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN CHADWELL

Participants included Luke Kirchmayr, John Chadwell and Tony Brester for the LPHS boys, and Sophia Cone, Samantha Suazo and Carly Wilson for the girls.

The participants wrote responses to EBS in emails describing their experiences.

Wilson described her experience at state and the friendships she made.

"Aside from learning the legislative process of Montana, participating in mock trials, or winning an elected role, the greatest takeaway from my time at Girls State was how powerful young teenage women can be," Wilson said. "I came across many girls my age who have already done so much for their communities and it inspired me. I also learned how easily girls from ranches in rural Montana and girls from urban 'cities' like Kalispell can truly come together and build friendships despite their differences."

Suazo echoed Wilson in pointing out the power of young women.

"It is inspiring to me to be able to share and collaborate with other females," she said. "When each one of us brings a quality to the table, we make an incredible team. I also believe it is essential to have conversations about politics, issues taking place in our state and our rights as citizens."

On the boy's side, Chadwell also found friends while learning at the State event.

"Boys State was truly an amazing experience for me," Chadwell said. "Aside from learning about the intricacies and functions of the Montana government, I formed strong friendships with kids from all parts of Montana and heard from some life-changing speakers. I am overjoyed with the American Legion for making this experience available to us!"

At the end of the week, two delegates are selected to attend Boys Nation held in Washington, D.C. These two delegates will represent Montana as "senators" to pass bills and run for National office during that week.

Chadwell will serve as one of these delegates at Boys Nation in July.



Samantha Suazo (left) Sophia Cone (center) and Carly Wilson (Right) are the three LPHS girls who attended Girls State in Helena June 13-19. PHOTO COURTESY OF SAMANTHA SUAZO

Fireworks banned in Big Sky for July Fourth

Madison County issues countywide ban, Gallatin bans in Big Sky, West Yellowstone

BY BELLA BUTLER

BIG SKY – The night sky in Big Sky will be lit only by stars this July Fourth following the Gallatin County Commission's approval of an emergency ordinance on June 30 banning fireworks in Big Sky and West Yellowstone. The ordinance follows "stacks" of public comments, according to commissioners, requesting the ban, primarily from the Big Sky and Hebgen Basin areas.

The Madison County Commission also approved a firework ban for the entire county earlier on June 30. Madison County Commissioner Jim Hart said that nearly all public commenters, from Big Sky to Virginia City, were in support of the ban.

The Gallatin ban applies to what the ordinance describes as the Big Sky High Fire Hazard Area, or land in Gallatin County south of milepost 61.5 on U.S. Highway 191; and the West Yellowstone High Fire Hazard Area, or the land in Gallatin County south of milepost 32 on U.S. 191. The Gallatin County ban is in effect for 30 days and Madison's ban is in effect indefinitely.

Though fireworks are one of many traditions used to commemorate the United States' Independence Day, the West is currently plagued by drought, high winds and scorching temperatures. Both Gallatin and Madison counties jumped from a moderate to severe drought rating from June 21-28, joining about 38 percent of Montana in the designation.

"From a fire season perspective, it is incredibly dry," said Cory Lewellen, district ranger with the Custer Gallatin National Forest's Bozeman Ranger District. "Since the beginning of June, we've really seen August-like conditions."

Lewellen said the ranger district has been monitoring energy release component—how readily a fire can burn and how quickly it can grow—for the last 10 years in Bozeman. Currently the ERC has been above the maximum measured in the last decade. "If we have a fire start, that fire can really get going. It's dangerous right now."

This, paired with recent record heat waves and blustering winds sweeping the region, have made for high fire danger and in some cases, early-season fires.

On June 17, a wildfire swallowed a tree and the surrounding acre near the South Fork Loop in Big Sky (see page 9). The following day, another fire ignited south of the Gallatin Riverhouse Grill alongside U.S. Highway 191. Both fires were contained quickly but were a testament to the current dire conditions and a reminder to the local community and visitors of the present risk.



The South Fork Loop Fire, which started on June 17, sends a tree up in flames. PHOTO BY ANDY HAYNES

TIPS TOWARD RESPONSIBLE OUTDOOR RECREATION:



THINK AHEAD AND HAVE A BACKUP PLAN



CHECK LOCAL RESOURCES BEFORE YOU GO



PRIORITIZE SAFE CAMPFIRE HABITS TO AVOID STARTING A WILDFIRE



KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU ENCOUNTER WILDFIRE SMOKE OR FLAMES



DON'T THROW CIGARETTES, MATCHES, ETC. ON THE GROUND OR OUT OF WINDOWS

Big Sky resident Michelle Horning was one of many to reach out to the Gallatin County Commission to request a firework ban. She said current fire danger as well as the two recent local fires inspired her to reach out.

"I think anyone that visits Big Sky or lives here knows that we have many neighborhoods that are very treed, and I just feel like being proactive about not having fireworks this year is the right thing to do to protect everyone's homes and people and pets," Horning told Explore Big Sky on June 30. Horning has lived in Big Sky since 1994 and said she can't recall a year where conditions were this bad this early.

In addition to public comments, the Big Sky community members demonstrated their favor of a fireworks-free Fourth of July by supporting the Big Sky Ski Education Foundation's decision to cancel its annual fireworks sale.

Each summer, BSSEF sets up a firework stand a few weeks before the Fourth. The sale is one of their biggest fundraisers and makes up a crucial portion of their budget—last year the stand brought in \$45,000. On June 24, BSSEF announced it would not sell fireworks this year.

"We want to ensure the safety of our community this 4th of July and preserve the surrounding environment," Jeremy Ueland, the program's director, wrote in a press release. "We believe fireworks are a high-risk activity this season and hope that anyone who decides to use them does so safely, legally, and responsibly. We will be doing our part by not offering fireworks for sale this summer."

To make up for the lost funds, BSSEF launched an online fundraiser. To date, the alternative appeal for donations has raked in \$24,000, including a \$10,000 contribution from the Lone Mountain Land Company and \$5,000 from Big Sky Build. The Yellowstone Club

Community Foundation announced on June 30 that they would match the next \$10,000 raised to help BSSEF reach their goal of \$45,000.

"The decision that BSSEF made was a very difficult one for them to make, but I think the community at large appreciates their commitment to putting the citizens in the area first," said Big Sky Real Estate VP of Sales Ania Bulis.

While Big Sky's sole firework stand will be vacant, the Bozeman, Belgrade and Four Corners areas are still stocked with stands. At the Gallatin County Commission's first reading of the emergency ordinance banning fireworks, Quinton Field with Big Box Fireworks in Belgrade spoke out against the ban.

"I understand that the products that I sell can be problematic for all these agencies. In my 20 years of doing it, I've seen years that were drier than this where I'm at [in Belgrade]," said Field, a volunteer fireman who says he educates customers on firework use and safety as a fireworks salesman.

Neither of the counties' bans prohibit the sale of fireworks, only the use.

The Arts Council of Big Sky, which puts on a large, public fireworks display each July Fourth during a free music performance, announced on June 27 that it was canceling the show this year due to fire danger.

"I feel like the Arts Council like many people thinks that the safety of the community is the No. 1 thing when we're doing any events," Arts Council Executive Director Brian Hurlbut told EBS on June 30.

Hurlbut said that recent local fires, fire danger ratings and no forecasted precipitation led the Arts Council to their decision. He added that the community sentiment, evident through social media and the support provided to BSSEF, ushered them toward canceling the show.

"We want to be reflective of what the community is responding to and it seems to me ... and our board of directors and the staff that overwhelmingly people don't want any fireworks this year," Hurlbut said.

Though the sky will remain dark, the Arts Council's Music in the Mountains will return on July 3 and 4 after a pandemic hiatus in 2020, and other holiday festivities will decorate the weekend with red, white and blue (see page 7).

"Obviously we're disappointed that we can't have fireworks," Hurlbut said. "It's a huge part of the July Fourth event. It's such a cool place to see the fireworks, and I know a lot of people are going to miss them, but we still have a great event that night. It's going to be a great party, and obviously we're just excited to get back to live music and we'll just have to do with that."

Mira Brody and Joseph T. O'Connor contributed reporting to this story.

South Fork Loop Fire contained, cause under investigation

Big Sky Fire Department and partnering agencies issue quick response



The South Fork Loop Fire ignited on June 17, torching a tree near the trailhead. PHOTO BY JOSEPH T. O'CONNOR

This summer the Big Sky Fire Department will host a total of six Hazardous Fuels Chipping Days across July and August, in addition to the two that occurred on June 21 and 22. The Chipping Days are meant to help Big Sky homeowners clear fuels such as dead trees and other vegetation out of defensible spaces around their homes.

Upcoming Chipping Days are:
July 26 and 27 & August 9 and 10

To participate, follow these easy steps:

1 Limb trees and clear underbrush areas around your home

2 Pile the debris on your driveway or somewhere accessible by the BSFD truck

3 BSFD firefighters will come and chip your pile giving you the option to accept the mulch for landscaping use or they will haul it away

Call BSFD at 406-995-2100 for more information or to be added to the pickup routes.

BIG SKY – The South Fork Loop Fire, which started on June 17, is fully contained following a quick response by the Big Sky Fire Department and partnering agencies, including the Yellowstone Club Fire Department, the U.S. Forest Service and the Gallatin County Sheriff's Office.

“We had an awesome response from the valley and Yellowstone Club [fire departments], and were highly effective at putting it out,” said Seth Barker, deputy fire chief with BSFD.

The South Fork Loop Fire was first reported on Thursday at 4:04 p.m. When BSFD arrived on scene, a single tree was ablaze near the South Fork Loop trailhead and the department immediately requested mutual aid but canceled soon after when they were able to gain initial fire control. However, crews quickly realized that there was risk of spot fires from embers and continued mutual aid resources to assist.

The fire was fully contained by 6 p.m. BSFD transferred command to U.S. Forest Service crews who remained on site to monitor potential hot spots.

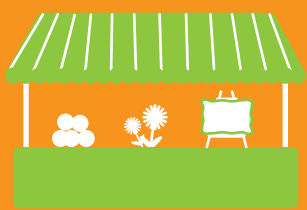
No evacuations were issued, but parts of Aspen Leaf Drive and Grey Drake Road were closed during the incident. The fire remained under an acre and the cause is still under investigation.

According to data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 46 percent of the contiguous U.S. is under drought conditions and Montana is expected to see above-average wildfire conditions this summer. BSFD urges the community to be diligent, as trees are currently at August moisture levels.

“We have to be diligent to minimize unnecessary ignitions this year because this is just a sneak peak into how volatile of a fire season this could be for us,” BSFD stated in a June 18 press release.

There are currently three active fires in Montana; the Deep Creek Canyon Fire near Townsend, the Robertson Draw Fire in Red Lodge and the Crooked Creek Fire in the Pryor Mountains.

“Be super careful out there,” advised Barker. “We’re in a very dangerous season.”



BIG SKY FARMERS MARKET

American Legion Post 99



The Big Sky Farmers Market has been providing the American Legion Post 99 with a way to connect with the community—and raise money for their various causes—nearly since the conception of the farmers market itself. Adjutant Capt. Jack Hudspeth says they started their booth selling local honey probably two years after the market started.

It all started with 6,500 beehives in Fort Shaw, Montana. Jim Savoy, manager of Treasure State Honey, was a good friend of Devon White, the

owner of the Corral at the time, and would visit often. Eventually, the idea of providing the ranch's honey for resale at the Farmers Market came to a vote, and to this day the little golden jars have been flying off the table perched in front of Choppers each Wednesday evening in Town Center.

The honey, it turns out, is award winning. According to Hudspeth, Treasure State Honey won an international competition in Istanbul, Turkey and won gold out of 100 entrants.

“You can basically say it is the best honey in the world if you want to look at it that way,” said Hudspeth.

For the American Legion, the table is about more than honey—on top of the sales benefitting the nonprofits they support, they're hoping to grow their membership in both the American Legion and Sons of the American Legion. The local post provides funds for the Lone Peak High School Oratorical Contest, the American Legion baseball team, maintaining the white crosses along U.S. Highway 191, a scholarship program for the Friends of Lone Peak High School and support the Big Sky Food Bank, the Salvation Army and Habitat for Humanity.

As for the honey, it apparently helps allergies.

“We have one guy that comes back every year that says he had allergies since he was a kid and his mom gave him raw honey and he's been better ever since,” Hudspeth said. Although he's not sure of the science behind it and provided no guarantees, Hudspeth admits he puts a spoonful in his coffee everyday—just in case.

Mutiara LLC Pearls

For William White, the magic of his booth at the Big Sky Farmers Market is connecting the perfect pearl with the person who will be wearing it. White and his wife, Patea, own Mutiara LLC Pearls, and specialize in sourcing the most beautiful and rare pearls Mother Nature produces. They act as both a provider for jewelers across the country, and design beautiful pieces of their own, all on display at their booth each Wednesday from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Patea is from Tahiti French Polynesia and her friends and family have been harvesting pearls in Tahiti for many years. Armed with her background and inspired by the beauty that pearls provide a wearer, White started Mutiara after graduating from school in 2003. The two have been full time residents of Big Sky for three years where they raise their children, Ann Marie, 6, and Aitoa, 11.



Alongside pairing person with pearl, White enjoys educating patrons of his booth about the process of harvesting and

culturing Tahitian black pearls.

“The easiest way to describe it is it's like surgery,” White said. “The farming process is very complicated and very labor intensive and science oriented. The production of a beautiful pearl is a phenomenon of nature.”

White says pearls are a unique piece to wear because they are organic, derived from a Black Lipped Oyster. He and his family also enjoy bringing a piece of Tahiti to the Big Sky community, so they can experience the feeling of an island from far away.

“The moments that I've been in involved in—whether it's a special occasion, anniversary, wedding, whatever that be—that's a really special thing to be a part of for me,” White said. “The emotions that a pearl can bring out are wonderful.”

PGA champs, NFL stars to compete at Moonlight for charity

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY – A star-studded cast of athletes will grace the fairways of The Reserve golf course at Moonlight Basin on July 6.

There will be a community viewing party for Big Sky in the Town Center Plaza for The Match that will feature the Fork & Spoon food truck, live music, activities such as a bounce house and golf simulator, as well as indoor viewing options at Tips Up, Blue Buddha Sushi Lounge and Copper Big Sky. Attendees are encouraged to bring canned food donations or make monetary donations, all of which will go to support the Big Sky Community Food Bank.

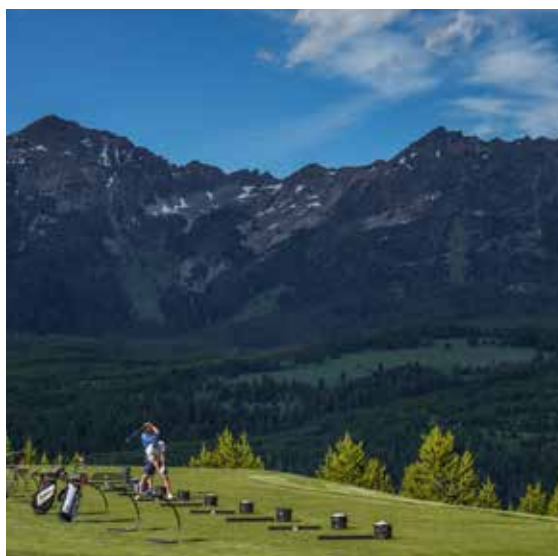
Moonlight Basin announced on May 26 that its golf course, The Reserve, will host The Match, an annual televised golf tournament that puts PGA and NFL stars head-to-head to raise money for rotating charities.

In this fourth iteration of The Match, happening July 6, six-time major winner Phil Mickelson will pair with seven-time Superbowl champ and Match veteran Tom Brady to compete against 2020 U.S. Open champion Bryson DeChambeau and NFL MVP quarterback Aaron Rodgers.

Capital One and Turner Sports present this year's tournament, which TNT will cover exclusively.

This year, the tournament will benefit the national nonprofit Feeding America along with other charities, according to USA Today. Last year's event raised \$20 million for COVID-19 relief efforts, and previous tournaments raked in cash for causes like American Red Cross and Historically Black Colleges and Universities, among others.

The picturesque Reserve golf course, designed by Jack Nicklaus and listed by Golfweek as the third best private golf course in Montana, sits at about 7,500 feet of elevation. Nestled in the shadow of the iconic Lone Mountain, the course features dramatic elevation changes throughout the 18 holes.



The Reserve golf course at Moonlight Basin offers scenic views and large elevation changes throughout the picturesque course. PHOTO COURTESY OF MOONLIGHT BASIN

Greg Wagner, director of golf and club operations at Moonlight Basin, says The Reserve is “The best course you've probably never heard of” and he added that “everywhere you look is something pretty special.”

According to Wagner, the creators of The Match reached out to Moonlight earlier this year to see if the club would be interested in hosting the event.

“Fourth of July is a beautiful time in Big Sky so it will be a great time of year for the event, and we are super excited to showcase Moonlight on national television,” Wagner said. “It's not every day that this happens for a golf course.”

The tournament will exclusively occupy The Reserve course on July 6 and there will not be live fans in keeping with the last three Matches that have occurred. Wagner explained that the players will each ride in their own golf carts and the pace of play will be such that a gallery could not keep up with them.

PGA champion Mickelson will again anchor the tournament, having played in all of the previous three. This iteration will reunite him with Brady, his teammate from 2020.

In 2020, Mickelson and Brady fell to opponents Tiger Woods and Peyton Manning. This year, due to injuries, Woods has been replaced with DeChambeau.

Matt Kidd, managing director of CrossHarbor Capital Partners, Moonlight Basin's owner, expressed his excitement that Moonlight Basin will be hosting the tournament. “We are thrilled that The Reserve at Moonlight Basin was chosen to host the fourth competition of The Match,” Kidd said. “The course is spectacular and it will be fun to see it showcased in this way. We look forward to watching Brady, Rodgers, Mickelson, and DeChambeau hit the course.”

A version of this story originally appeared in the June fourth edition of Explore Big Sky.

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Scott Poloff named new head of school at Discovery Academy

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY – From a small coal mining town in Pennsylvania to a classroom in Dubai, Scott Poloff moved around the world before recently landing in Big Sky. Poloff has been teaching for 26 years and he will now use his considerable experience to lead the Big Sky Discovery Academy as the new head of school.

Poloff grew up in Elderton, Pennsylvania, a town even smaller than Big Sky with a population of approximately 450 people. He went on to receive an undergraduate degree from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in elementary education and a master's degree in educational leadership from Point Park University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Following his formal education, Poloff began his teaching career as a fourth-grade teacher in Gulf Breeze, Florida in 1995. Most recently, he worked as a head of school in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

"I had never been in this part of the world, but this move for me was about my family," Poloff said, adding that he looked for his next career step in places where he knew his parents would want to come when they retired.



As the new head of school at Big Sky Discovery Academy, Scott Poloff brings 26 years of teaching experience and an appreciation for small-town living. PHOTO COURTESY OF SCOTT POLOFF

"I chose Big Sky because it was a small town with a very strong sense of community," he said. "It reminded me of the town where I grew up and of the small beach community of Gulf Breeze, which is where I started my teaching career."

Poloff took the helm of the Discovery Academy on June 15 and said he is excited to be back in the states and to explore everything that Big Sky has to offer. In addition to engaging in the Big Sky community, Poloff has big plans for the academy.

"My number one goal is to make sure that we're established in the community and to make sure that our parents and the community members understand exactly who we are as Discovery Academy," he said. "It is to educate that we are a nonprofit that every penny that comes into the school is spent on the school and so that means that we're constantly giving back to Big Sky as well."

Poloff was hired by a committee consisting of two parents, two staff members and two board members.

"We are impressed with Scott's commitment to student and staff development," Big Sky Discovery Academy Board Chair Karen Maybee wrote in an email to EBS. "His leadership experience, which includes creating and executing strategic plans, implementing policies and procedures, and financial management, is exactly what Discovery needs to continue to grow and improve in a sustainable way. We are very excited to have someone who has the experience to take Discovery to the next level."

One of the parents on the hiring committee, Andrew Schreiner, also expressed his excitement to have Scott on board the Discovery team.

"As part of the committee, I was so excited and proud to be a part of hiring Scott," Schreiner wrote in an email. "His experience, attitude, and passion will take Discovery to new levels, and continue to build on Discovery's past successes."

Poloff emphasized his goals to keep Discovery Academy and its students involved in the Big Sky community. His first order of business is creating a high school volunteer program. This coming school year, as part of the program, students will be required to volunteer for 80 hours over the course of the school year.

Some of the benefits from the volunteer program, according to Poloff, will include new experiences, a better understanding of different career paths and giving back to the community. He also noted the importance of Discovery's status as a nonprofit to him and to the community. "I wanted to be somewhere that I knew all of the school's efforts and resources would go directly to the staff, students, and community," said Poloff, who was a part of the leadership of a for-profit school for three years.

"I also love the vision and mission of the school," he said. "I love that it provides families with a different option for their child's education."

He described Discovery as "a school for every child" where they are able to "Discover Your Potential" through small class sizes and personal instruction.

"We believe that we are giving every kid the chance to discover their potential and a different type of learning environment," Poloff said.

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LPHS students win national engineering award

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY – Three Lone Peak High School students recently captured a national engineering competition award for their outstanding mousetrap car. Carly Wilson, Maddie Cone and Joah Levine joined forces on team “Elevation” to compete in and ultimately win the 2021 SECME National Student Engineering Competition featuring the “Art of Engineering.”

SECME, or the Southeastern Consortium for Minorities in Engineering, is a Georgia-based nonprofit started in 1975 as an alliance of educators, universities and industry and government partners committed to preparing more minorities and women for college and careers in STEM. The organization holds national competitions each year, while offering professional development and classroom resources for teachers and mentors committed to helping students with STEM projects.

A congratulatory email reached Jeremy Harder’s inbox on June 16 from Julaunica Tigner, SECME Educational Outreach Manager informing him and the three students of their victory. Harder, the sixth through 12th grade technology teacher for the Big Sky School District, served as the faculty contact with SECME and provided the students with a space in his classroom to work on their project.

Levine, now a rising senior, was the catalyst for an LPHS team competing in a SECME competition. He hails from Boca Raton, Florida, where he began participating in SECME competitions in seventh grade. His family came to Big Sky during the COVID-19 pandemic and attends FAU High school in his hometown.

Levine reached out to Harder to see if there was a robotics club. There was not, so Levine grabbed the reins and started a fifth-grade robotics club and the high school SECME club.

“I came to Lone Peak High and looked for some robotics activities because I had done a lot in my hometown and I wanted to bring it here,” Levine said. “A big part of my hometown was wanting to do well in all of our robotics activities and we also wanted to spread it ... and help other communities grow their robotics programs.”

After a period of uncertainty over whether the SECME competition would even happen due to the pandemic, Levine said he and his team got to work and, five prototypes later, had their award-winning mousetrap car competition-ready.

“He’s a very creative, innovative young man who is way ahead of my time in tech,” Harder said of Levine, adding that he was excited to see the kids take the initiative to enter this competition.

Levine’s teammate Wilson said she became involved after he asked her to join the SECME club. She said Levine did an outstanding job leading the team and recalled the hours that she, Cone and Levine spend finishing the mousetrap car and the presentation.

“When I received the email that we made it to nationals and then won first place I was shocked,” Wilson wrote in an email to EBS. “Even though I still have limited experience with the world of STEM and mousetrap cars, I would totally participate in this club again because it taught me so many new skills and helped me to push myself out of my comfort zone.”

Levine plans to be back in Florida next school year but said he hopes to see the club continue at LPHS and is willing to help. Though he’s headed back home, Levine has big plans for STEM at Ophir School and LPHS.

“Ideally, it would be fun to start either a middle school or elementary team, along with the high school team for SECME,” he said. “We can start expanding into some of the other [competitions], and who knows? Maybe win another national award.”



The final prototype of team “Elevation’s” mousetrap car won them a national award in the SECME engineering competition. PHOTO COURTESY OF JOAH LEVINE

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Big Sky businesses lack workforce

Local housing shortage makes hiring workers difficult

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY – Walking down Big Sky’s main drag, Town Center Avenue, “Now Hiring” signs are visible in most storefronts, and as many business owners are testifying, staff shortages are forcing businesses to shorten hours or even close on various days of the week.

In the lead up to a busy tourism season in July, reservations are hard to come by and it is commonplace to try going somewhere for lunch only to find that it is closed. Finding workers in Big Sky is currently a huge challenge with very few applicants even vying for open spots. Those who do apply are then faced with a skyrocketing price of living and the nearly impossible task of finding available housing.

A number of factors are contributing to this national struggle playing out on the local stage.

Ryan Kunz, general manager of Lone Mountain Ranch, speculated about the different causes including prolonged unemployment benefits, a high cost of living and a significant decrease in people willing to work, specifically in the restaurant industry. The restaurant at LMR, Horn and Cantle, has had to close two nights a week and trim down menu options due to a shortage of culinary staff.

“The goal at this point is to try to find more culinary staff,” Kuntz said, “but at the same time making sure we’re taking care of the staff we have, that they feel the love.”

Striking the delicate balance between staying open and taking care of employees is a challenge many Big Sky businesses are facing this summer. With a busy tourism season getting ready to peak, the pressure is on as reservations are in increasingly short supply.

“People love Big Sky and they keep coming, and that’s an interesting place to be that we can’t exactly turn off the faucet of our visitor economy,” said Brad Niva, CEO of the Big Sky Chamber of Commerce. “What makes this world go round is these visitors that are coming into the area.”

After only a short time in his new role with the Chamber and Visit Big Sky, Niva has immersed himself in the issues facing the Big Sky business community.

“I think Big Sky has a disadvantage in this workforce issue because we have a lack of workforce on one hand and then we have a lack of housing on the other,” he said. “So, it’s a double whammy that we have two things working against us.”

The lack of housing has certainly impacted Lone Peak Brewery and Taphouse, leaving co-owner Vicky Nordahl with fewer than 10 employees out of the usual 29 that she would hire.

Walking into Lone Peak Brewery, patrons are greeted with a chalkboard featuring a corny, “daily dad joke” along with a sign requesting patience from customers. The joke is meant to spark a little joy in someone’s day and the request for patience is due to lack of staffing.

“It’s always been challenging to find staff,” Nordahl said. “This year there are not enough employees to go around. Even with the wage hikes, the cost of living is still too high.”

That high cost of living has been the main reason Nordahl has struggled to staff her business and she’s had to get creative to solve that problem.

The events space above the dining room and kitchen at Lone Peak Brewery is now a living space with bunks for up to 10 people. Currently, two of Nordahl’s employees live there, each with their own small cubicle with a bunk and a dresser, as well as a bathroom, laundry facility and kitchenette. Employees living in that space do not pay rent, according to Nordahl.

In the past, the Nordahls rented a house for employees but the lease was not renewed this year. Nordahl speculated the non-renewal was motivated by the owner’s desire to put their own employees in that housing.



Pizza cooks Tom Grande (left), Niamh Gale (center) and Jack Laxson (right) put together pies on a recent busy night at Pinky G’s Pizzeria in Big Sky. OUTLAW PARTNERS PHOTO

In addition to creatively solving the housing issue, Nordahl has raised staff wages, shortened business hours to serve only lunch five days a week, and limited capacity to 50 percent.

Charles Joerger, prep cook, dishwasher and the Nordahls’ right-hand man, is one of the employees currently living in the converted events space. He’s been working in Big Sky for 15 years and has worked for Nordahl for six.

Joerger said he was once able to afford renting his own place but this year, without Nordahl’s generous solution, he would have had to move home to Utah. As a hardworking employee on a small team, Joerger also asked for patience from visitors, just like the sign on their front door.

“Expect times to be longer,” he said. “Don’t get upset about your food taking too long. We’re going to

do it as fast as we can. It’s still going to come out fresh, it’s just going to take a little bit longer.”

In a similar boat to Lone Peak Brewery is Pinky G’s Pizzeria on Town Center Avenue.

Pinky G’s has also had to shorten operating hours for the summer due to a staff shortage. Co-owners Megan and Cameron Hartman opened Pinky G’s second location in Big Sky in January of 2020 after Cameron served as the general manager for the first restaurant in Jackson, Wyoming.

Megan explained that their goals initially after opening were to serve as a late-night location like the restaurant in Jackson while offering delivery services.

“We don’t have enough staff to open for our full and ideal hours,” she said.

Megan said challenges in Big Sky and Jackson are similar in that housing is the main factor, but added that things weren’t quite as bad for the Jackson location because there were more housing options in Jackson and the surrounding area.

“The town is growing so fast I feel like the town isn’t really equipped to handle the amount of tourists we see,” she said, referring to the recent explosive growth in Big Sky.

The problem is clear: Big Sky lacks workforce, which is due in large part to a lack of housing. The solution, however, is less straightforward than many would like.

On June 29, Niva hosted a listening session, inviting several local business owners to sit down with the Chamber and larger community partners to discuss current challenges and potential solutions.

“The community is coming together trying to solve the problem,” Niva said. “This is not an easy fix and it’s not something that can be done overnight. I don’t think it can happen even in one or two years. It’s really a long-term play here.”

Niva’s main goal right now, he says, is to listen to concerns from businesses and bring the right people together. Some solutions he shared from the listening session include a larger commitment to creating more affordable housing in Big Sky, more local transportation for workers, and potentially bringing in food trucks this summer to alleviate some of the pressure on restaurants.

As he pointed out, when one restaurant is closed on a day they would usually be open, that pushes all the traffic to the ones that are operating.

Big Sky has a long road ahead and, in the meantime, its business owners are hoping for a bit of grace.

“We need [tourists] to pack their patience and bring it here,” Nordahl said. “They can replace it with a bottle of huckleberry vodka on their way home.”



Many businesses in Big Sky are unable to hire enough staff for the summer season and “We’re Hiring” signs abound. COLLAGE BY JULIA BARTON

BIG SKY CHAMBER



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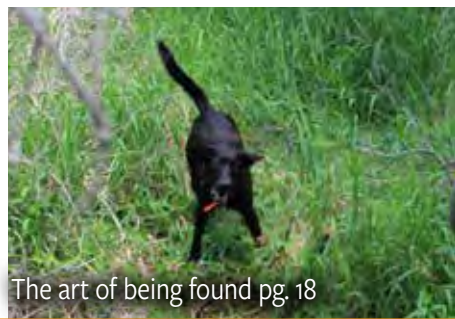
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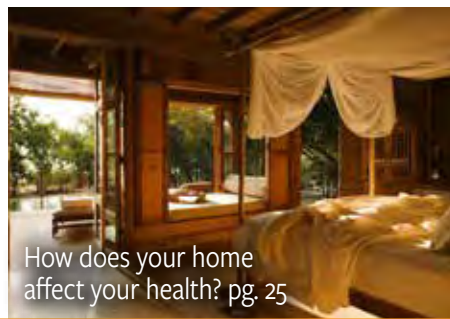
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SECTION 2:

ENVIRONMENT &
OUTDOORS, HEALTH,
AND SPORTS

The art of being found pg. 18



How does your home affect your health? pg. 25



Big Sky softball pg. 31

Minimizing my impact through responsible recreation

How I used Leave No Trace for a more sustainable backpacking trip

BY JULIA BARTON

LEE METCALF WILDERNESS – As we slip into our hiking boots, climbing shoes or Chacos and step onto trails this summer, it's imperative to keep notions of responsible recreation at the forefront to ensure the wilderness we love stays healthy for generations to come.

There is an assortment of ways we can think about respecting our landscape while recreating, perhaps the most prevalent being the seven principles of Leave No Trace. These principles came into public discussion following a boom in outdoor recreation in the 1970s, explained Ben Lawhon, director of education and research at the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics.

“We started to realize that we can either regulate visitors, or we can teach them how to enjoy the outdoors in a way that leaves it as good or better than it was,” Lawhon said.

By the late 1980s, federal agencies including the Forest Service and the National Parks Service agreed there was a need for a nonprofit entity to raise awareness for minimizing outdoor impacts, thus, in 1994 LNT was officially born. The center established an initial six principles and now, rooted in their extensive body of research, promotes seven principles for LNT.

When thinking about outdoor impacts, it's important to note that LNT is not the first time these ideas have been explored. “[Native peoples] have practiced land stewardship for millennia, right, so we're not the first people to come up with this idea,” Lawhon said.

With this in mind, I ventured out on my first Montana backpacking trip of the season up to the Spanish Lakes in the Lee Metcalf Wilderness, cataloguing some of the choices I made to minimize my impact on the land.

Plan Ahead and Prepare

Making a plan for your outdoor adventure, no matter how small it may be, can help ensure a fun and safe trip for both you and the land you're visiting. I started by choosing the backpacking area and route I intended on taking and the time I'd be in the backcountry for.

In my case, this was the South Fork Spanish Creek Trail to the Spanish Lakes Trail #411 on June 26 and 27. This allowed me to learn the area's rules and pack proper gear for the weather and terrain.

Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

This principle aims to protect surfaces and the vegetation that blankets the ground in outdoor spaces, from mountain wildflowers to desert living soil. To best follow this principle, I walked on trails wherever possible and avoided placing my tent atop fragile flowers or grasses, opting instead for dirt.

It's not always possible to hike or camp without leaving an impact, Lawhon explained to me, emphasizing that it is always worth thinking about how you can best minimize your trace given your circumstances. “It's not about perfection, it's about action,” he said. This sentiment is especially true when traveling off trail, avoiding less durable surfaces whenever possible.

Dispose of Waste Properly

Often the most difficult aspect of waste disposal outdoors is for human waste. When not disposed of properly, human waste is both very unsightly for other visitors and harmful to wildlife and other humans alike as it can pollute water and spread disease.

To minimize impact, find a spot at least 200 feet from a trail, campsite or water source and dig a hole at least six inches deep to bury human waste. For other waste, such as food wrappers, toilet paper or other scraps, it's as simple as putting it in a bag and packing it out with you. I kept a Ziploc bag in my pack for any trash I made and added to it the trash I found left by others.

Leave What You Find

The natural beauty of the land is a primary reason we go outside. Let others enjoy it too by leaving the terrain as you found it.

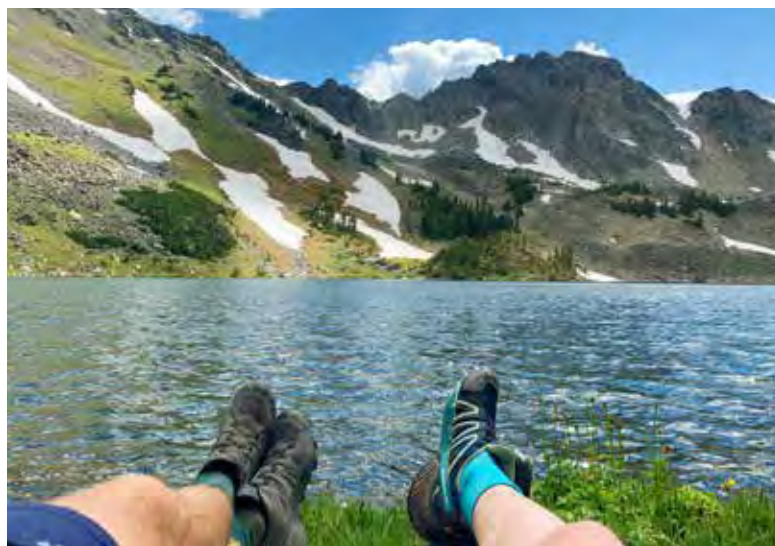
Up at the Spanish Lakes, I saw names carved into tree trunks, shiny rocks piled together and plenty of littered trash. I made sure not to contribute to these disruptions and did my best to return the landscape to its original state by dismantling rock piles and picking up garbage.

Minimize Campfire Impacts

Given the drought conditions we're experiencing so far this summer, minimizing campfire impacts and use is as important as ever.

If you're thinking about building a fire in the wilderness, first make sure there are no current fire restrictions and use a fire ring to keep the fire contained. Your personal skills for building and maintaining a fire should also be considered as well as if there is enough wood in the area that its removal would go unnoticed.

“Just because fire is allowed, doesn't mean it's the best thing to do,” Lawhon said. For this reason, I opted out of building a fire on my backpacking trip. Since I brought a stove to cook my food and layers to keep me warm, a fire wasn't truly necessary or worth the risk.



Enjoying the high-alpine view at the highest of the Spanish Lakes after a day's trek into the backcountry. PHOTO BY JULIA BARTON

Respect Wildlife

When travelling into the wilderness, we are leaving our homes and going directly into those of the wildlife that inhabits the landscape. Learn about what creatures inhabit the land you are on and, if coming into contact with them, view from afar and do your best not to disturb them.

I saw a mountain goat and a bald eagle among a few other animals while out in the Lee Metcalf Wilderness and, although it would have been awesome to get a better view, kept my distance and avoided making loud noises or otherwise disturbing them. We also properly hung our food, trash and other smelly items in a bag off the ground to discourage animals from eating our food or coming into our campsite.

Be Considerate of Other Visitors

The final principle is being mindful toward how your adventure impacts others out in the wilderness with you.

A few general rules I followed included letting uphill hikers have the right-of-way, camping and breaking off the trail and out of sight from other backpackers and being kind to the other groups I encountered.

My trip was short and relatively easy in terms of LNT, but it's not always that simple. “Every situation is different,” said Haven Holsapple, the LNT program manager for the National Outdoor Leadership School, an organization that teaches LNT as part of their curriculum. “It's really about stewardship and doing what we can to preserve the natural environment... reaching out with specific questions and practical field experience are the best way to learn.”

Although there are not always black-and-white answers to LNT questions and behaviors, minimizing your personal impact has a compounding effect on keeping the landscape beautiful, healthy and with the ability to provide for those that come after you.

Lawhon explained that they center has found a correlation between using LNT principles when recreating outdoors and overall environmentally friendly behavior in the day-to-day. It's important to think about how our actions impact our environment, even when we're not in the wilderness.

For more information about how to minimize outdoor impacts or questions about specific LNT practices, lnt.org is a useful educational tool to peruse before heading out on your next adventure.

The art of being found

Search and Rescue dogs know practice makes perfect

BY MIRA BRODY

BRIDGER CANYON – I sit quietly on a semi-comfortable stump in a pine forest just north of Bridger Bowl Ski Area. Insects buzz and a raven cries overhead, but otherwise it is quiet. I am a lost person, and I'm relying on my own scent to be found.

Suddenly, the air is punctuated by the jingle of a collar bell and a massive German shepherd emerges from the brush. Sabre takes one look at me, turns away, sits and emits three sharp barks. Bonnie Whitman, his handler, follows close behind, pulls out an orange Kong ball on a rope, and we both reward his successful find with play.

Sabre and Whitman are one of five Western Montana Search Dog teams out at Crosscut Mountain Sports Center on June 26 refining their skills. The nonprofit trains dogs in four season wilderness search and rescue for Gallatin County Search and Rescue. This includes article location (such as clothing), water search and recovery, tracking and trailing, avalanche recovery and human remains detection. In addition to Gallatin County, the teams are often utilized by sheriff's offices throughout Montana, Idaho and Wyoming.

"It is such an art and we're never masters at it," said Whitman, a retired Yellowstone National Park ranger and current coroner for Gallatin County Sheriff's Office. She has been handling search dogs for nearly three decades and is considered a veteran of the craft.

When called onto a scene, the teams use a grid system, then zig-zag within those grids to narrow the search. Wind, temperature and amount of time passed since the subject was last seen all affects the dog's ability to search, as all those elements can affect how a person's shed skin cells direct the dog.

"That's why you want to get them out early," said Chris Dover, another search and rescue veteran. Dover is the handler to Chipper, a 3-year-old German shepherd.

Search and Rescue dog training begins at eight weeks, full certification takes about two years and there are different certifications for each discipline. The hardest test consists of 120 acres—the handler and their dog are tasked with finding three lost people in four hours. After being certified, the dogs need consistent practice—about twice a week—to hone skills and build those foundational elements. They'll recertify every two years and retire at around 10 years old.

"These are our personal dogs and the traits that makes them good SAR dogs make them kind of terrible pets, to be honest," said Alyssa Hitchcock. Hitchcock is training her first dog, a black lab named Yodel, and has been with Western Montana Search Dogs for about four years. "They're super driven, they are very confident and very bullheaded in getting what they want."

To aid with their practice days, Western Montana Search Dogs calls for volunteers to be "lost." In addition to myself, our other volunteer today was Julie Kunen, who saw the posting on a Bozeman community forum. She tells me she responded because she "loves dogs," while lovingly petting Ringo and Jake, two bloodhounds who belong to Russell Lubner, who has been with SAR since 1994.

"It's super important that we get new people out to volunteer to hide just because, if you can imagine, if we hide for each other all the time, the dogs get used to finding the other handlers," Hitchcock said.



Yodel, a black lab, receives his favorite yellow toy to play with after a successful cadaver find. PHOTO BY MIRA BRODY

To get "lost," Kunen hikes off trail through the woods in the same way a disoriented person might. She marks both her start and end point on a GPS so that the handlers can track how accurate they were after the find. Back at the start, Chipper sniffs a gauze pad Kunen had hiked with to get a whiff of her scent before starting on the hunt. He places his nose on the ground (called "tracking"), and moves into the woods to find Kunen.

When Chipper picks up her scent, he does what Dover calls a "refind"—each dog has their own way of communicating a refind. Reading these communication cues is why the intimate bond between a handler and their dog is so important when they're out in the field searching for a person, explains Whitman.

"The dogs, they don't make mistakes, it's how we read them that matters," she said. "There's no mistaking for that handler what that dog does. We all learn to read our dogs and we help each other with what their ears are doing, their tails are doing."

The entire process resembles a huge puzzle; you're mapping out a large area, sometimes over treacherous terrain or in poor conditions, following a dog who is seeking out a specific scent. The effort takes a lot of teamwork, both between handler and dog, as well as between teams.

"We're all each other's successes, whether it's his dog or my dog, it doesn't matter because we all need to help each other be successful because that's what we do and that's why we're out there," said Whitman.

Back in my hiding spot, I tug at Sabre's toy. His large, bull-shaped head shakes back and fourth as he tugs excitedly, encouraging me to keep playing. He has earned his reward—I am a saved lost person.

"People think they do it because they like people," said Whitman, watching the both of us. "But really, they just do it for this."



Chipper, a German shepherd, stands at the ready with his handler, Chris Dover before a search. PHOTO BY MIRA BRODY



Alyssa Hitchcock and Chris Dover of Western Montana Search Dogs use phone coordinates and a GPS to try and find a "lost" person during a Search and Rescue dog training course at Crosscut Mountain Sports Center. PHOTO BY MIRA BRODY



Five alpine lakes to find cold water and plenty of fish



A backpacker reels in a small fish at an alpine lake in the Spanish Peaks. With rivers already stressed by low flows and heat, EBS fishing columnist Patrick Straub suggests fleeing to these gorgeous spots to fish. OUTLAW PARTNERS PHOTO

BY PATRICK STRAUB
EBS CONTRIBUTOR

With our abnormally low stream flows, it's important we consider a variety of options to ensure our fisheries can sustain for the long term. As a veteran of fishing in the heart of summer on our local waters, these hot, dry conditions make this summer challenging...and we're not even to the half-way point.

The number of flights servicing Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport serves as proof that our area waters are experiencing a level of angling pressure never seen before. Fortunately, we live in a place with a diversity of angling opportunities. These options to beat the heat and ease the pressure on our creeks and rivers can be found in many of the region's alpine lakes.

Here are five high-altitude lakes to fish this summer.

Ramshorn Lake

This lake is the reward for a 6.5-mile hike high into the Gallatin Range. With healthy populations of cutthroat and golden trout, the reward is worth the effort. Back dropped by Fortress Mountain and Ramshorn Peak and surrounded by pine trees, the lake is as picturesque as it is fishy. With a hike through meadows, spruce and lodgepole pine, and a variety of boulder and scree fields, anglers desiring a unique experience should visit Ramshorn Lake. As with most of the lakes on this list, be sure to pack your bear spray. The best flies to use here are the beadhead Prince Nymphs in size 12 and 14 and Parachute Adams in size 16.

Lava Lake

A 3-mile, one-way hike, Lava Lake gets its fair share of traffic. However, most of that traffic occurs as the "Big Sky brunch crowd" so any angler that can get an earlier start will enjoy this beautiful lake in relative solitude 'til around midday. With an elevation gain of 1,600 feet one would think the casual hikers would be weeded out, but the lake sits in a beautiful basin surrounded by jagged peaks of the Gallatin Range and is motivation for all to keep on trekking. The nearly 50-acre lake is home to rainbow trout that are best caught slowly stripping size 16 to 20 beadhead nymphs. Look for fish cruising along the deep drop-offs.

Grebe Lake

This large lake ticks in at just over 150 acres. The hike into Grebe Lake

is an easy 3-mile, level stroll. However, the fishing at Grebe Lake is an adventure. In 2017 the National Park Service poisoned the lake to eradicate non-native rainbow trout, then re-introduced native grayling and Westslope cutthroat trout. Reports have been good, but Grebe Lake still remains somewhat of a little mystery in its current state. Because of this it's a good destination for any intrepid angler seeking to potentially rediscover a unique fishery. Arctic Grayling is the main draw at Grebe Lake and for most anglers fishing Grebe Lake proves fruitful.

Pine Creek Lake

After hiking 5 miles and gaining over 3,600 feet in elevation, anglers at Pine Creek Lake often need a little rest before casting to the numerous native Yellowstone cutthroat trout swimming in this lake's crystal-clear waters. The first mile of the trail is mellow and busy, but most hikers are simply heading to Pine Creek Falls. Past the falls is when the effort is required for the remaining four miles. Pine Creek Lake fish see little pressure, so a size 12 beadhead Prince or a size 14 Parachute Adams typically gets the job done—just watch your weather because an afternoon thunderstorm can make the return hike across the numerous exposed scree slopes a little nerve-racking.

Hidden Lakes

The name of this collection of lakes is little deceiving—they are anything but hidden. Five of these lakes hold golden or rainbow trout, and some hold both, and the trail to access these lakes is a 3-mile moderate stroll with a gradual elevation gain of 1,200 feet. Because a road exists to the trailhead, even though it is a rough road, the Hidden Lakes have been found. However, because there are a variety of lakes, anglers can still find a spot of their own. The best flies for these waters are size 18 beadhead Pheasant Tails and size 20 Parachute Adams.

Compared to feeling the rush of a river or stream against the legs, fishing a lake can seem mundane. But the lakes in the high country, anglers can enjoy exhilarating hikes with expansive views and be rewarded with wild and native trout.

Patrick Straub has fished on five continents. He is the author of six books, including "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Fly Fishing" and has been writing the Eddy Line for nine years. He was one of the largest outfitters in Montana, but these days he now only guides anglers who value quality over quantity.



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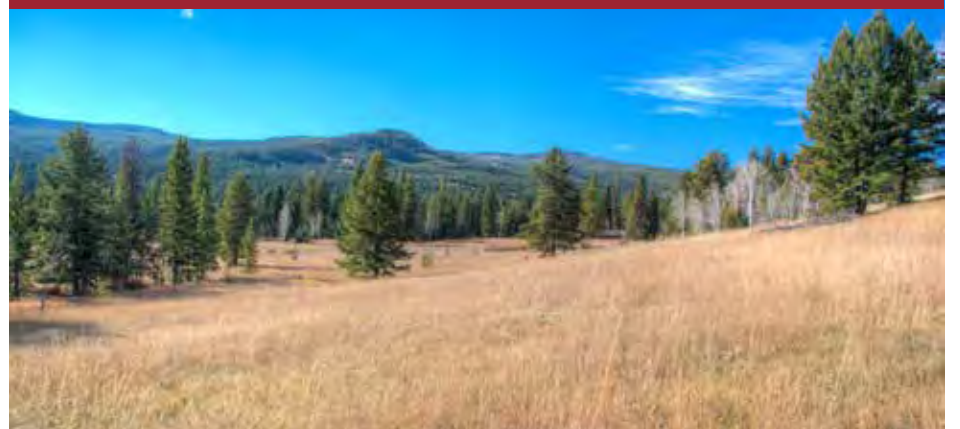
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ON THE TRAIL

A Day in the Park

BY SARA MARINO
EBS CONTRIBUTOR

Looking for more ways to get outside and have fun in Big Sky? There is something for everyone at the Big Sky Community Park. Spanning 44 acres, the park is an ideal location for the young and the young at heart, to gather and play – summer, winter and all times in-between.

If sports are your thing, take advantage of the softball fields, basketball court, sand volleyball court, tennis and pickle ball courts and multi-use field overlooking Lone Peak.

For hikers and bikers, try Little Willow Way, a leisurely path through the park that follows the West Fork of the Gallatin River and connects to the Black Diamond Trail. The creek is easily accessible and offers many spots to cool off and play on the banks. Pets welcome, please help us keep the park clean by picking up after your dog.

There is a playground for younger children that has a covered picnic pavilion, a nice



The Big Sky Community Park is a great gathering place for people of all ages to play, walk, bike and do so much more. PHOTO BY DAVE PECUNIES

shaded area to take a rest after playtime. Older kids can also enjoy the skate park and climbing boulders.

Be sure to check out the park as you plan for Fourth of July festivities. There will be a 5K Road Run starting at 8:30 a.m. where runners, walkers, and strollers are all welcome. Register in advance at runsignup.com/Race/MT/BigSky/Bigskyroadrace, the first 200 racers registered will receive a race t-shirt.

Directions: From Meadow Village, head north on Little Coyote Rd, go past the Big Sky Chapel and fish pond to the first right-hand road. Look for the Big Sky Community Park sign at the entrance.

For more information about Big Sky's parks, trails and recreation programs, visit bscomt.org. The Big Sky Community Organization engages and leads people to recreational and enrichment opportunities through thoughtful development of partnerships, programs and places.



With room to roam, it's time to get outside.

Come experience the wonders of nature and the wide open spaces of the Tetons. Jackson Hole Mountain Resort is open for summer and ready for your next adventure. Ride the Bridger Gondola to reach breathtaking views, hike through wildflowers to remote vistas, experience the thrill of Via Ferrata, rip through perfectly crafted mountain bike trails, indulge at three exquisite dining locations, and discover world-class specialty retail shopping with curated products and gear. New this year, Sweetwater Gondola provides access to expanded intermediate and advanced bike trails. Sail over tabletops, flow around corners and then catch the lift for a ride back up to the top.

Looking back to when water was plentiful



BY DAVE MARSTON
WRITERS ON THE RANGE

During his 50 years in rural western Colorado, Jamie Jacobson has seen a lot of flooding. While caretaking a farm in 1974, Jacobson watched three acres of its riverfront float away. More recently, it's been drought, and then worse drought.

Jacobson farms on Lamborn Mesa, perched above Paonia, population 1,500. He keeps his orchard of peaches, nectarines and cherries alive thanks to the Minnesota Canal that serves 170 customers.

The ditch is nine miles long and carries water from the snowpack that's accumulated around 12,725-foot-high Mt. Gunnison. This mountain of many ridges used to hold water like a sponge, but snowfall has been light year after year, and the ground sucks up a lot of the melting snow.

"Back in the 1970s it was different," says Jacobson, who moved from New York where he started his career as a cameraman on film shoots. "Paonia was snow-covered in winter, and when the melt came, the river tore at its banks. One of my first jobs was using machinery to stuff boulders into junked cars and then cabling them to the riverbank. Now it's scary because of water that isn't there."

This summer, Jacobson's ditch rider told him irrigation water would run out by the end of June. "That would have been unthinkable decades ago," Jacobson says. But the canal's two reservoirs have filled only one year out of the last four. "In the old days, daily highs in summers were in the 80s," Jacobson says. "Last May it got really warm, and in June this year the temperature is hitting 100 degrees."

So it's not surprising that his orchard is suffering. "My trees are stressed, and some I've had to let go. I've lost a great deal," he says flatly.

But Jacobson, 75, remains resilient and upbeat, though he was diagnosed with arthritis at age 10 and has suffered from back pain all his life. He even underwent a kidney transplant from a friend three years ago.

Now getting around in a wheelchair, he still hopes to fly in his ultralight – equipped with a parachute. During the 1970s, he enjoyed a moment of fame when he turned 20,000 gallons of spoiled apple cider into alcohol that substituted for gasoline.

"Coal company execs visiting their mines around Paonia all wanted to try out my alcohol-fueled car," he recalls. "We had some great joyrides on moonshine."

Jacobson's ditch company was founded in 1893 by farmers and ranchers who knew they had to import water to make the semi-desert land valuable.

"They dug those ditches with hand labor and mule scrapers and built the canals incrementally," says Western historian George Sibley. "You either bought in with money or sweat equity, enlarging the canals as neighbors down the ditch bought in." It's a similar story throughout the Western states, moving water from mountains through a system of prior appropriation – first to put water to work, first to claim it.

For example, Southern Idaho, in the grip of extreme drought, is braced for prior appropriation cutbacks. Junior water users in the Wood River Valley who pump water from wells have been notified that their water might be shut off early this summer. Meanwhile New Mexico's ancient system utilizes a water master or mayordomo to administer cutbacks. And if one state knows drought, it's Nevada, where Las Vegas sends most of its sewage-treated water back to where it came from – Lake Mead.

The water flowing through piped canals or open ditches into Paonia and its mesas were never meant to stick around. Farmers who flood-irrigate use roughly 20 percent of the water on their land. Eventually, that water may be reused by farmers and homeowners as much as seven times before crossing into Utah as part of the Colorado River.

These days, a lot less water ever gets there. The river's two big reservoirs, Lake Powell and Lake Mead, are only about 35 percent full, and river managers in the seven states that rely on the Colorado are trying to figure out how to cope. It's a daunting prospect, squeezing out water in the midst of a drying climate.

Meanwhile, Jacobson looks at his diminished orchard and hopes he'll have enough fruit for the people who came last summer. They brought their own baskets and wandered the orchard to pick what they wanted.

"People had a good time, and at \$1.50 per pound we sold out the crop last year," Jacobson says. "If we go down this year, we'll do it in style."

Dave Marston is the publisher of Writers on the Range, writersontherange.org, an independent nonprofit dedicated to spurring lively conversation about the West. He owns land with shares in Minnesota Canal.



Jamie Jacobson drives a tractor at age 33 with daughter Jodie in 1979. PHOTO FROM FAMILY ARCHIVE

THE NEW WEST



BY TODD WILKINSON
EBS ENVIRONMENTAL COLUMNIST

Great editorial cartoonists have been part of the long tradition of journalism in America. While the profession has fallen upon tough times that parallel the struggles of newspapers, there remain some true geniuses able to distill the essence of issues pictorially through characters, attitude and sparse use of words.

When John Potter came out of retirement last winter and launched a new series of nature-related spoofing, “It’s All Relative,” for Mountain Journal, many knew him better for his career as a fine art painter of wildlife and Western landscapes.

Potter, who for years worked as an editorial cartoonist at The Billings Gazette and where one of his pieces was once nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, divided his youth between Chicago and the Lac du Flambeau (Ojibwe) reservation in northern Wisconsin.

Be it his provocative cartoons or his fine art, Potter himself is, by his own admission, shy when it comes to being in the limelight. As a socially awkward and introverted kid, he says he spent most of his early years away from people and in the embrace of the forest and its wild inhabitants.

“My family likes to joke that I was raised by wolves,” he notes. “I should be so lucky.”

Eventually, he spent much of that time in the wild with a sketchbook in hand. Drawing and sketching the mammals and birds that came to him as he sat motionless was both a source of solace and an obsession. “They were not just ‘subjects,’ they were more like family,” he explains.

Potter eagerly pursued art in high school and afterward headed west to attend Utah State University where he earned degrees in illustration and painting. Following graduation, he spent 19 years as a staff artist and cartoonist for The Billings Gazette, drawing everything from illustrations to courtroom sketches, and his editorial cartoons that were reader favorites.

However, feeling restless and pulled by a desire to paint full time, he gave up job security, went through years of struggle and emerged as artist whose work today is found in private collections around the world and in the permanent public collections of several museums, including the National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson Hole, the Brinton Museum in Big Horn, Wyoming, and the Montana Historical Society Museum, the same place that has works by one of his influences, Charles M. Russell.

Here’s part of a chat I had with him recently.

TODD WILKINSON: *Cartooning is its own fine art form. In journalism, cartoonists can win awards and one of yours was nominated for a Pulitzer. How did cartooning get on your radar screen and who are a few of the others who inspire you?*

JOHN POTTER: My first inspiration for cartooning was Charles M. Schulz (I copied “Peanuts” cartoon strips obsessively when I was a kid). I loved “Peanuts.” Got an autographed letter from Mr. Schulz once, too. Cartoonists that have inspired me include the great Walt Kelly (“Pogo”), Bill Watterson (“Calvin & Hobbes”), Garry Trudeau (“Doonesbury”), and political cartoonists Bill Mauldin and Pat Oliphant.

T.W.: *You worked at The Billings Gazette as their editorial cartoonist and graphic artist for years. How did you get that gig?*

J.P.: Someone on the hiring and firing committee at The Gazette had a serious lapse in judgment. Actually, a fellow cartoonist named Craig Curtiss, who

Nature painter brings Native influence to cartoon spoofs

was also a former lettering artist for Stan Lynde (“Rick O’Shay”), helped me get that job, giving me a great referral.

T.W.: *You have serious concerns about the fate of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem as a region where wildlife can still persist and where indigenous people can be reconnected. What do you hope your cartoons dealing with contemporary social and ecological issues will accomplish?*

J.P.: I’ve heard it said that a cartoonist’s job is to make people laugh while you’re calling them out on their s**t. Sometimes you gotta get their attention first, though. I hope to awaken people to the notion (i.e.: belief) that Yellowstone, the larger ecosystem and all land is sacred. We need to view the Earth as a scared being, not just a rock to be exploited. We have a responsibility to our Earth, and to our great grandchildren, whom we are borrowing the land from. We can do it with a smile.



T.W.: *You and a friend were there in the winter of 1995 when wolves were restored to Yellowstone and you offered them an honoring prayer in the Lamar Valley. When you look back at that moment, what sticks out in your mind?*

J.P.: My brother, Scott Frazier, and I were asked by Yellowstone to perform welcoming and adoption ceremonies for the wolves when they were returned to the park during both phases of reintroduction, in 1995 and ‘96. These remain as some of the best moments and memories of my life.

T.W.: *You were raised on and off the Lac du Flambeau Chippewa Indian Reservation in Northern Wisconsin. What do you like about the West?*

J.P.: Our people have cultural ties to these Beartooth Mountains. I felt a sense of belonging to these mountains the first time I saw them, as a teenager, without knowing about our relationship to them at the time.

Todd Wilkinson is the founder of Bozeman-based Mountain Journal and is a correspondent for National Geographic. He also authored of the book “Grizzlies of Pilgrim Creek,” featuring photography by Thomas D. Mangelsen, about famous Jackson Hole grizzly bear 399. Read his latest article on renowned actress Glenn Close in the summer 2021 edition of Mountain Outlaw. MMountain Outlaw magazine.





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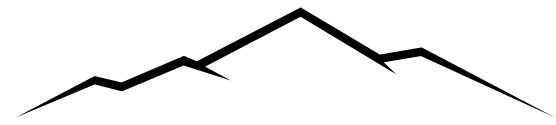


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Yours in Health

BY DR. ANDREA WICK
EBS HEALTH COLUMNIST

Did you ever think about the way that your outer world affects your inner world? Your living environment may directly affect how you think and feel. Practices such as feng shui, minimalism and decluttering can make us more aware of how to make our living space feel better. This has become especially important due to the stress of the last year and spending more time at home.

Color can change our mood in an instant by affecting our nervous system and activating different emotions. Colors like pink and blue are more calming to the brain, while red and orange are more awakening. Why is this? According to psychologist Ayben Ertem, when color is transmitted to the brain through the eyes, hormones are released that affect emotions and energy levels. Color can change heart rate and increase emotional awareness.

If there is a room in your home or office where you need to feel more awakened and stimulated, red may be your color. Orange is also a color that can commonly make people feel more invigorated. If you would like to feel more relaxed in your home, soft pinks and blues may be a good choice since they bring a sense of tranquility and calmness. Color is thought to affect everyone differently, though, due to personal preference and experience.

Feng shui is the practice of arranging personal belongings and furniture in a specific way to restore harmony and balance in a living space. It helps to create balance between the material and the natural world. The five elements, earth, fire, water, wood and metal, are incorporated into each room. The theory goes that if you balance the elements in your home, it will directly reflect in your life by the power of intention. In feng shui, the bedroom is the most important room in the house because of sleep and romantic relationship. We tend to spend most of our time in this room. This can be a good place to start when making a shift. Make sure your bed is against a wall and not facing the door or directly in line with the door. Mirrors should be pointing away from the bed. It is also important to keep electronics out of the bedroom, especially televisions and computers. The bedroom is not a place to have devices that may overstimulate. Also make sure to declutter under your bed—energetically it is not a good space to store belongings.

How does your home affect your health?

Minimalism has been a new popular way of living where you only live with what you truly need. Taking things out of your life that may be a distraction may help you fulfill your life's purpose. I jokingly thought that if you have closets full of stuff that are cluttered then what emotional baggage are you "hiding" or not wanting to clear out? Our external environment is a direct reflection of our internal environment. Do the things in your home bring you joy? If they don't, it might be time to purge, clean and de-clutter. Who knows what amazing avenues may open up to you when you are mindful of the space you live in!

Dr. Andrea Wick is a chiropractor and applied kinesiologist. She graduated from Life University in Marietta, Georgia, and now practices in Big Sky. She has a passion for holistic health care and being active in the outdoors. Her practice, Healing Hands Chiropractic, is located in the Meadow Village Center. Visit drandrearwick.com to learn more.



A combination of intentional colors, feng shui and decluttering could vastly improve your life, according to EBS health columnist Dr. Andrea Wick. PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDREA WICK



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Are professional athletes role models?

BY AL MALINOWSKI
EBS SPORTS COLUMNIST

I'm sure nearly every athlete has heard the speech and most coaches have delivered it. It goes something like this: By joining this team you are now a representative of this program and/or school. You are expected to be a positive role model for the community.

In 1993, NBA star Charles Barkley appeared to challenge that mentality in a memorable Nike commercial in which he fiercely declared "I am not a role model." Barkley took criticism from other NBA players and fans who felt he may be ignoring his responsibility, but Barkley stood firmly by his words.

Later in that same commercial, Barkley stated something that is quoted less often. "Parents should be role models. Just because I can dunk a basketball doesn't mean I should raise your kids." At the time, some may have interpreted those words to excuse some of Barkley's past indiscretions, but with time it is clear his message was that none of us should expect professional athletes to replace our own responsibility as role models to the kids in our community.

Many sports fans idolize their favorite athletes. They collect autographs on sports memorabilia and some watch or attend games donning their favorite player's jersey. At times that fan adoration can manifest into unrealistic expectations associated with people they have never actually met. While athletes do have a responsibility to be role models for our youth, their obligation should be complementary to the example provided by those who have regular contact with those kids.

Living in Big Sky has given me the opportunity to meet many former professional athletes. I have learned that besides having been blessed with exceptional ability in their sport, famous athletes are regular people. They share the same joys and landmark events

in their lives; they share some of the same challenges and disappointments too. They are rightfully expected to be role models, but it is unfair to expect them to model a higher standard of behavior than we expect from ourselves.

Just like the rest of us, professional athletes make mistakes and do things they regret. Whether it's a ground ball that goes between a player's legs or a poor personal decision, those moments can provide an important example to others in accepting responsibility for one's actions when the outcome is unfavorable. Fortunately for most of us, our low points won't be broadcasted on national television or debated on social media.

Too many times, athletes and coaches have been proven not to be the high-character individuals they were believed to be. In some cases, as the truth is revealed, it becomes clear that those with a personal relationship to the athlete were aware that the public perception was inaccurate all along.

In 2021 Barkley's words are as applicable as they were in 1993. We all share the responsibility to be role models to the next generation and cannot expect someone our children follow on the internet to have a greater responsibility than we do. Fortunately, Big Sky is a place where many people accept this responsibility and our kids do have numerous positive role models to emulate during their personal development and growth.

When I reflect on the shared responsibility to be role models, I am reminded of a quote from author Robert Fulghum, "Don't worry that children never listen to you, worry that they are always watching you." While that may seem like a daunting responsibility, don't we owe it to those role models who did it for us?

Al Malinowski has lived in Big Sky for over 25 years. He has coached middle school and high school basketball at the Big Sky School District for 22 of those years. He believes participation in competitive athletics has been critical in establishing his core values.

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Does your equipment fit you?

BY MARK WEHRMAN
PGA EBS CONTRIBUTOR

Golf, like many other sports including skiing, requires fairly expensive equipment to play the game. Because of all of the advancements in technology, making sure your equipment fits you is more important than ever. When it comes to golf clubs, we can boil the fitting down to four main things.

The first and most important thing is making sure you have the proper shaft flex. The shaft is truly the engine of the club and the flex needed is directly related to the individual's swing speed. Shaft flex refers to the bend in the shaft that happens when the club is "loading" in the downswing.

For example, if your swing speed is very high or strong, meaning you would swing a 6 iron over 90 mph, then you would need a stiff shaft flex. If your swing speed is much slower where you swing a 6 iron less than 70 mph then you would need a light flex. If your swing speed is somewhere in between those ranges you would fit into a regular shaft flex. There are also ladies-specific shaft flexes that will generally fit most women but I have, more than once and depending on the individual, fit women into a "men's" shaft flex, depending on their clubhead speed.



A few different types of shafts and club lengths compared to each other. PHOTO BY MARK WEHRMAN, PGA

The other thing to consider when fitting for shafts is the type of shaft you are buying. Generally, someone who is fit into a stiff shaft flex will prefer or be benefitted by using a steel shaft. If you are someone who fits into a regular flex shaft you could use either steel or graphite, and someone that fits into a light or ladies flex generally is always going to use graphite.

The main difference between the two shafts is the weight. Steel is much heavier than graphite. So, if you are someone who is looking to gain clubhead speed without having to physically swing harder, graphite would be your best option. Now, for the most part I am talking about irons. When purchasing metal woods, you are always going to be using graphite shafts, but making sure you have the proper shaft flex is still necessary in the fitting process.

The second factor used when fitting clubs, irons to be specific, is the lie angle of the clubhead.

Most clubs bought off the shelf in a store are going to be a standard lie angle. Most golfers are going to fit into a standard lie angle but there are a lot of players that fit in to a lie angle that is more upright than standard or opposite, flatter than a standard lie.

We use a lie board to measure this angle. The process is somewhat rudimentary; We put a piece of electrical tape on the sole of the club and have you hit shots off of the board, making sure that each strike, you strike the sole of the clubhead off of the board causing a scar on the tape that tells us where the club is bottoming out.

Why is this factor important? Well, if your golf club is too upright for you the heel of the club will bottom out, first causing the toe of the club to swing into the ball first which will result in a hook or your shot missing to the left, if you are a right-handed golfer. If your club is too flat for you you'll get the opposite effect and the toe of the club will bottom out first, causing the heel to impact the ball first resulting in a fade or slice, with the shot missing to the right, if you are a right-handed golfer.

Based off all of this information, if you have bought a set of clubs "off of the rack" I recommend seeing a PGA Professional to check the lie angles for you to determine if the club properly fits you.

The third factor is the length of club.

Women's clubs are going to be approximately an inch shorter than men's clubs. They generally will be lighter than men's clubs too. This is by design but doesn't mean women will always fit into women's length golf clubs and same with men. The length of clubs needed is determined by height and arm length of the individual. For example, I am 6 feet 2 inches tall but am able to use standard length golf clubs because I have long arms. So, just because you are tall doesn't always mean you need longer clubs.

Lastly, another important thing in the club fitting process is the grip size.

There are many different diameters of grips used. We measure from wrist to the tip of your middle finger to decide the grip size needed. Sizes range from undersize, standard, midsize, and oversize grip handles. This size is measured by the butt diameter of the grip. Getting the right grip size on your clubs will help secure the connection your hands feel on the club. Grip is what controls the clubface so I highly recommend checking to make sure you have the proper size grip on your clubs.

I am not advocating that every golfer needs to get fit for clubs and more than likely if you are a novice golfer the clubs you have are more than adequate. But, if you have gotten to the point in your game where you are practicing a lot with the goal of improving your scores, you should check with your local PGA Professional to see if your clubs fit you.

Mark Wehrman is the Head Golf Professional at the Big Sky Resort Golf Course and has been awarded the PGA Horton Smith Award recognizing PGA Professionals who are model educators of PGA Golf Professionals.

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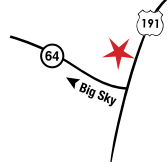
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BIG SKY SOFTBALL 2021




Every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evening throughout the summer, 15 softball teams gather to compete in the local league at the Big Sky Community Park. OUTLAW PARTNERS PHOTO

TEAM NAME	WIN	LOSS
1. YELLOWSTONE CLUB	5	1
2. MULLETS	0	7
3. MOOSEKETEERS	1	5
4. CAB LIZARDS	1	6
5. BOMBERS	1	6
6. HILBILLY HUCKERS	5	1
7. LPC – GOLDEN GOATS	6	0
8. RUBES	0	5
9. BIG SKY BALLERS	1	4
10. BEARS	5	0
11. THE CAVE	3	2
12. LOTUS PAD	5	1
13. YETI DOGS	5	2
14. MILKIES	5	1
15. WESTFORK WILDCATS	2	3



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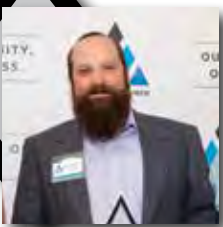
The theme for the evening's events were clear: the Big Sky community has an abundance of passionate and talented people all contributing to our collective success. In a year of hard choices and hard work, 5 people and businesses stood out in particular for getting us safely through so that we could stay connected, informed, and open. Here are the winners:



EMERGING ENTREPRENEUR

Someone who has brought fresh entrepreneurial engagement to the Big Sky Community.

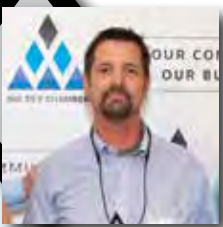
WINNER | BILL FRYE, ENCORE ELECTRIC for his boots on the ground approach to increasing his business and community presence by volunteering and offering his electrical services to some of Big Sky's largest projects including the new Swift Current 6 Chairlift Storage Building.



NONPROFIT PERSON OF THE YEAR

Celebrating the hard work of non-profit organizations that work to build our community.

WINNER | DANIEL BIERSCHWALE, BIG SKY RELIEF & BIG SKY RESORT TAX for working tirelessly to lead our community's COVID response by coordinating the operational partners and leaders, initiating and running the free community wide surveillance testing, and other communications to Big Sky regarding the pandemic.



BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR

This person helps elevate Big Sky with their service to our community.

WINNER | KEVIN GERMAIN, LONE MOUNTAIN LAND COMPANY & RESORT TAX BOARD CHAIR for putting the long hours in to put Big Sky first by sharing information and keeping this town moving forward. His continual calm and displays of integrity were instrumental in some of the biggest projects launched for our community this year.



BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

This award honors the business that best exemplifies a success and care in the community.

WINNER | THE OUTLAW PARTNERS for keeping us connected and informed this last year with their weekly Town Hall series, their Friday Afternoon Clubs and stellar community reporting on all issues as well. When we all had to stay apart for safety, you brought us together and kept us in the know.



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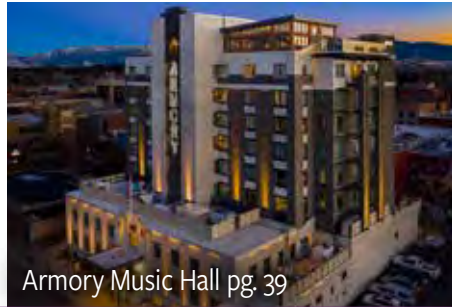
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SECTION 3:

BUSINESS,
ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT,
DINING & FUN

MIIBS: Lindell & Associates P.C. pg. 35



Armory Music Hall pg. 39



The Catch and Release of Joe Brooks pg. 46

Chamber issues Black Diamond Business Awards, reflects on pandemic year

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY –The 24th annual Black Diamond Business Awards Dinner on June 22 was an evening of merriment, reflection and celebration of the Big Sky business community as well as the ability to gather together once more.

Just 15 months prior, the town of Big Sky was thrust into uncertainty as the pandemic closed in on the ski town following the early termination of Big Sky Resort's winter season on March 15, 2020. Many speakers at the Big Sky Chamber of Commerce dinner recounted this day while also driving home the theme for the evening, "Looking at life after COVID," by reminding the 120 people in attendance how the adversity brought the Big Sky business community even closer together.

"Slowly as we got into summer, we started seeing signs of life. Despite the national press, this little community started seeing signs of life," said Scott Johnson, Chamber board chair.

Scott and other speakers discussed the resiliency demonstrated by the various businesses in Big Sky throughout the pandemic as well as the importance of partnerships.

Anna Johnson, director of business development for the Chamber, presented a handful of stats on Chamber membership including growth in dues revenue and growth in new members, with 75 members joining in the past year. She also highlighted the four ribbon cuttings the Chamber oversaw this past year which marked the opening of four new businesses in Big Sky.

"For a small town, our significant economic impact and interconnectedness of businesses reaches much further across the region and the state," Anna said.

Scott spoke to part of the reason Big Sky businesses are successful, even in the face of adversity. "We are here tonight to recognize the power of partnership," he said, also offering kudos to the Big Sky community for its recovery from the pandemic.



Anna Johnson with the Big Sky Chamber of Commerce kicked off the 24th Annual Black Diamond Awards Dinner. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER

Looking out over the gathering, Scott grinned. "It's incredible to stand here tonight and see everybody and their faces and their smiles," he said.

Before passing the mic off to the new Chamber CEO, Brad Niva, Scott concluded by saying, "We have plenty of challenges, let's not forget them, but we can overcome them."

Niva opened his speech by saying that while he doesn't currently have tattoos, if he were to get any, one forearm would bear the words "be of service" and the other would read "get shit done."

Niva's proclamation was greeted by peals of laughter and became an integral theme for the speeches that followed.

His message to the community was clear: the Chamber is meant to be the voice of and support system for local businesses. He tipped his hat to the strong organizations in Big Sky as well as the many leaders in the community.

The main event for the evening was the presentation of five different awards to various businesses and individuals in the Big Sky community.

Taking home the hardware for Emerging Entrepreneur was Bill Frye, service account manager with Encore Electric. Daniel Bierschwale, executive director of Big Sky Resort Area District, was honored with the Non-Profit Business Person of the Year award for his work on Big Sky Relief and the community surveillance testing program.

"This award is not about me, this award is about our community initiative," Bierschwale said.

Kevin Germain, V.P. of Moonlight Basin, was awarded Business Person of the Year and Outlaw Partners, publisher of Explore Big Sky, won Business of the Year.

Finally, well-known locals Kathy and Dave House were awarded the Chet Huntley Lifetime Achievement Award.

All winners offered recognition of the Big Sky community and the relationships and partnerships that hold it together.

The evening was capped by keynote speaker Chantel Schieffer, president and CEO of Leadership Montana, who spoke on the leadership lessons that we can all take with us from the pandemic.

Schieffer presented eight leadership lessons but placed special emphasis on empathy and its role in making a great business leader. She brought the evening full circle by wrapping her powerful speech with Niva's words "Be of service and get shit done," a simple yet effective call to action for all in attendance.

"I thought that was one of the neat things in this community that there are a lot of good leaders here," Niva said the morning after the dinner.

Niva also gave a shout out to the award winners and highlighted the importance of this yearly Chamber gathering.

"Last night was fun. It was an opportunity to highlight some people that have really stepped up in our community and made a difference and I think all the people that were given awards last night that was perfect, that's a great way to be recognized by your peers, and as a thank you," he said.



Attendees listened to various speeches during dinner all touching on the importance of the partnerships and resiliency of the Big Sky business community. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER



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Making it in Big Sky: Lindell & Associates P.C.

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY – Lindell & Associates P.C. has been serving the Big Sky community for 20 years under the leadership of Richard Lindell for the past 10 years. He bought the firm a year after moving to Big Sky in 2009 and making a commitment to his goals.

Lindell had always wanted to live in the Rocky Mountains and experience a small community with strong family values and an emphasis on an outdoor lifestyle. His ticket to that goal was purchasing a CPA firm and at the time he was looking, Lindell said there were about half a dozen firms for sale within a 200-mile radius of Big Sky.

“However, while driving through the Gallatin Canyon and turning onto the Spur Road and seeing Lone Peak on the horizon, I realized Big Sky is the place I envisioned,” Lindell said.

Today, the firm still provides the service it was originally founded to provide: accounting for the owner’s associations in Big Sky. They also offer income tax services for individuals and businesses here in Big Sky, as well as bookkeeping, payroll and advisory services.

Explore Big Sky sat down with Lindell to learn more about his time owning the firm and what Lindell & Associates does in the Big Sky community.

Some answers below have been edited for brevity.

Explore Big Sky: *Tell me about the history of Lindell and Associates. When did it start? How has it grown?*

Richard Lindell: Lindell and Associates started as a long-term goal early in my career. I began my career in public accounting in 1987 and loved the work, including working with clients to develop tax strategies and helping with their business goals. While I worked at different firms and in the banking industry, it was always my career goal to have my own firm. Then in 2009, I made a “now or never” commitment to pursue my long-term goal in part because my children were young and I wanted to spend time with them in the mountains. The firm, here in Big Sky, was actually started by Denise Touhy back in the ‘90s, and many long-term locals and clients I still work with remember Denise fondly. The firm was then sold to Henning & Schwarzkopf P.C. The buying and selling of CPA firms is an industry in itself, which is how I acquired the firm in 2010. At the time of purchase, I worked with the prior owners, specifically, Mike Schwarzkopf to manage the transition with the goals to make it seamless to the clients here in Big Sky and cater to Big Sky businesses by living and working here in Big Sky. These objectives have allowed the firm itself, under different ownership, to grow with Big Sky for approximately 30 years. Under my ownership, the firm has continued to grow by maintaining its core values of servicing Big Sky businesses and through word of mouth, along with Big Sky’s growth.

“By embracing the Big Sky way of life and getting to know our clients and their businesses, we have been successful in growing the business.”

EBS: *How big is your team?*

R.L.: My team varies between three to five members, who all live here in Big Sky. One of our core values, and while team members come and go as Big Sky residents do, I have been fortunate to have many great team members over the years. I am proud that one of my current team [members], Justin McKillop, graduated from Ophir [School], and upon graduating from Northern Arizona University with a business degree in accounting and a certificate in finance, returned to Big Sky. The team size changes due to the same challenges all Big Sky businesses face, which is employee retention and housing in Big Sky.



The team at Lindell and Associates varies from three to five members who all live in Big Sky. PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD LINDELL

EBS: *Tell me about the services you provide?*

R.L.: The firm has two major services that complement each other and allow for year-round business services. The firm was started in large part to perform accounting for the owners associations in Big Sky, which is still a core service we value and provide. We currently work with approximately 60 associations here in Big Sky, to provide all services ranging from collecting dues, invoicing owners, to financial statements and tax reporting. The firm also provides income tax services for individuals and businesses here in Big Sky, as well as bookkeeping, payroll and advisory services for local businesses.

EBS: *What is your favorite part of working at Lindell and Associates?*

R.L.: My favorite part of working at Lindell and Associates is actually living in Big Sky and getting to know the business owners and homeowners. We all know how great it is to live here, but as I always describe, I work approximately one minute from

my house; I work less than 50 yards from the golf course, 2 miles from one of the best fly-fishing rivers, and approximately 10 miles from one of the best skiing mountains, as well as minutes from the most beautiful hiking trails anywhere. These attributes make it enjoyable to work with my clients as they value the same benefits of living here.

EBS: *It’s the firm’s 20-year anniversary and your 10-year anniversary this year. How have you managed and grown your successful business in that time?*

R.L.: It is the firm’s 20-year anniversary, while I have owned the firm for the last 10 years, and as mentioned previously, the management of the firm has focused on providing accounting services to meet the local needs by being a part of Big Sky. By embracing the Big Sky way of life and getting to know our clients and their businesses, we have been successful in growing the business. Specifically, we are located in Meadow Village in close proximity to the Post Office, which makes it very easy for clients to stop by the office as part of their daily errands, and in Big Sky tradition, no appointment is necessary as we want to be available to our clients.

EBS: *What is the best business advice you have ever received?*

R.L.: I have received lots of great advice over the years, but one of them was “look where you are going, and don’t focus on where you are.” I think this is very relevant and is commonly used in skiing, especially in Big Sky, i.e. “look where you want to go, and don’t stare at your ski tips; if you do you will most likely fall or hit something.” This advice is pertinent to life and business as looking where you are going translates to having goals, both short term and long term, and don’t focus on the here and now. Also, just like skiing, you will experience bumps and challenges as you pursue your goals, so remember to adjust your course/goals as things change.

EBS: *Anything else you would like to add?*

R.L.: We enjoy living and working here in Big Sky, and I can’t think of a better place to do so. I recall several conversations with residents who have successfully achieved their goals of retiring in Big Sky, which always reminds me that I don’t have to retire to enjoy being in Big Sky, as I am already living and working here.

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BIG SKY CHAMBER
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BIG SKY EVENTS CALENDAR

Friday, July 2 – Thursday, July 15

If your event falls between July 16 and June 29, please submit it by July 7 by emailing media@outlaw.partners

Friday, July 2

Friday Afternoon Club: Wes Urbaniak and the Mountain Folk

Blue Buddha Sushi Lounge Patio, 6 p.m.

Wild West Yellowstone Rodeo

175 Oldroyd Rd., 7 p.m.

Live Music: Willie Waldman Project

Tips Up, 9 p.m.

Saturday, July 3

Big Sky Artisan Festival

Town Center Plaza, 10:30 a.m.

Music in the Mountains: Steep Canyon Rangers

Wilson Plaza, 7:15 p.m.

Wild West Yellowstone Rodeo

175 Oldroyd Rd., 7 p.m.

Live Music: Moonlight Moonlight

Tips Up, 9 p.m.

Sunday, July 4

Fourth of July 5K Run

Big Sky Community Park, 8:30 a.m.

Music in the Mountains: The Tiny Band

Wilson Plaza, 7:15 p.m.

Wild West Yellowstone Rodeo

175 Oldroyd Rd., 7 p.m.

Monday, July 5

Trivia Night

Pinky G's Pizzeria, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, July 6

Community Acupuncture

Fire Pit Park, 10 a.m.

Trivia Night

Cafe 191, 5:30 p.m.

Trivia Night

ACRE Kitchen, 6 p.m.

Wild West Yellowstone Rodeo

175 Oldroyd Rd., 7 p.m.

Wednesday, July 7

Hike Big Sky

Uplands Trail, 9 a.m.

Big Sky Farmers Market

Town Center, 5 p.m.

Wild West Yellowstone Rodeo

175 Oldroyd Rd., 7 p.m.

Live Music: Kent Johnson

Tips Up, 8 p.m.

Thursday, July 8

Music in the Mountains: The Dusty Pockets

Wilson Plaza, 7:15 p.m.

Live Music: Cole & The Thornes

Tips Up, 10 p.m.

Friday, July 9

Landscape Painting with Annie McCoy

Big Sky Community Park, 12 p.m.

Friday Afternoon Club: Matt Miller

Blue Buddha Sushi Lounge Patio, 6 p.m.

Wild West Yellowstone Rodeo

175 Oldroyd Rd., 7 p.m.

Live Music: Eric Holder Duo

Tips Up, 9 p.m.

Saturday, July 10

Hike Big Sky Tiny Trek

Crail Trail, 10 a.m.

Landscape Painting with Annie McCoy

Big Sky Community Park, 12 p.m.

July Art Market

2325 Birdie Dr, Bozeman, 4:30 p.m.

Live Music: Red Elvises

Tips Up, 9 p.m.

Sunday, July 11

July Art Market

2325 Birdie Dr, Bozeman, 11:30 a.m.

Living History Farm

Museum of the Rockies, 10 a.m.

Monday, July 12

Wild West Yellowstone Rodeo

175 Oldroyd Rd., 7 p.m.

Trivia Night

Pinky G's Pizzeria, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, July 13

Trivia Night

Cafe 191, 5:30 p.m.

Trivia Night

ACRE Kitchen, 6 p.m.

Wild West Yellowstone Rodeo

175 Oldroyd Rd., 7 p.m.

Wednesday, July 14

Hike Big Sky

Hummocks Trail, 9 a.m.

Big Sky Art Auction

Basecamp Tent, 11 a.m.

Big Sky Farmers Market

Town Center, 5 p.m.

Live Music: Telemark Tom & Mando Jim

Tips Up, 8 p.m.

Thursday, July 15

Big Sky Art Auction

Basecamp Tent, 11 a.m.

Music in the Mountains: Sneaky Pete & the Secret Weapons

Len Hill Park, 7:15 p.m.

Live Music: Take A Chance & Jenn 'n Juice

Tips Up, 10 p.m.

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Get back to WMPAC

Theater, dance and music return in person this July

WARREN MILLER PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

BIG SKY – For lovers of theater, music and dance, the summer at Warren Miller Performing Arts Center has become a local tradition, one that Executive Director John Zirkle has announced will return with live performances in July. Now in its eighth summer, WMPAC’s artists-in-residence actually never stopped creating and presenting, even last summer, and this season’s line-up is directly informed by work incubated during the pandemic.

“This summer’s line-up isn’t a ‘return’ to the theater, because we never left,” explains Zirkle. “It’s a continuation. You’ll see us incorporate new techniques and technology into the hallmarks of WMPAC summer: personal relationships with our community and our creators, the joy of seeing new work live, and the artistic process at work.”

The first performance of the summer, on Sunday, July 11, will be an episode of a new musical, “Keep Your Head Down,” which was commissioned last summer as part of WMPAC’s virtual Big Sky Summer Theatre Festival. This year, the project takes a leap forward with in-person performances from all of the artists. “Keep Your Head Down” is an episodic musical that uses docu-style interviews, original songs and animation to debunk myths about the Asian-American experience.

The timely and provocative show is now in development for a limited TV series. Audiences will see an episode of that series adapted for the stage, and get to discuss the process and material with the actors and creative team, lead by Ari Afsar and director Jess McLeod, after the show.



The Warren Miller Performing Arts Center is looking forward to a variety of shows this summer season. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WARREN MILLER PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

On July 17, Big Sky’s favorite dance company, James Sewell Ballet, is back. The hyper-collaborative and inventive troupe, locally known for dancing in ski boots, will team up with regional choir Roots in the Sky for a unique combination of movement and sound. Zirkle says the show will specifically highlight the joys of togetherness we’ve all been missing.

Finally, on July 30 and 31, the renowned Grammy-winning vocal group The Crossing returns for two unforgettable outdoor concerts, inspired by the Nordic ski experience and piano concert of last winter. “We’ve learned we can put on a concert anywhere a person can carry a backpack,” says Zirkle.

In the first concert, on Friday, vocalists stationed along a trail through the forest at the Jack Creek Preserve will provide “a new voice every 50 feet, as if the music is developing as you walk through it,” Zirkle explains. On Saturday, audiences will walk to a gorgeous mountain meadow above Moose Creek in the canyon

with Cache Creek Outfitters for a literal surround-sound experience. The musical selections at each venue will be different, reflecting the location, and give audiences a combination of natural beauty and refined artistry they won’t soon forget.

Reservations can be made for each experience online at warrenmillerpac.org. Spots are limited, and prices for entry range from \$19 per person for experiences at WMPAC to \$50 per car at outdoor locations. The ongoing vision of the Warren Miller Performing Arts Center is to create in the summer, present in the winter, and inspire year-round.

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Armory Music Hall reflection of intention, craftsmanship

Bozeman's newest indoor venue promises a memorable experience

BY MIRA BRODY

BOZEMAN – Fred F. Willson, famed architect to many of Bozeman's notable buildings, was a man who believed in precision and functionality. He went to great lengths to ensure all of his buildings were complete with intricate and artistic detail and would serve its occupants well. This intentionality lives on in one of his masterpieces, what today is the Armory Music Hall in the Kimpton Armory Hotel. More than 80 years later, Jason Wickens and Mandy Connelley of Deco Music Group are looking to bring a unique experience with each show in Bozeman's newest indoor music venue.

After a year of quiet stages due to the pandemic, these detailed experiences are what people living in and visiting Bozeman crave, Wickens says, and with live shows of all genres and mediums in the lineup, the hall will certainly not fall short on delivering a grounding experience.

“Sitting in the back of the room, you still felt like you were that person in the front row,” Connelley said of the intimate space. “When there's that few of people, that experience is elevated, you get that connection. You feel like they're talking right to you, and some of the time they are.”

Wickens remembers walking into the building when steel scaffolding and bird poop still littered the inside. The Armory, built in 1940, housed the Charlie Company and it was the headquarters of the 163rd Infantry Regiment, a National Guard unit with troops from across the state of Montana. After decades of litigation, changing ownerships and uses, the Armory Hotel that stands today—now Bozeman's tallest building at nine stories—took shape, all with the intention of preserving its history.

“I keep going back to the word ‘intention’ because that's what's really driving [this venue] and also really ... the history of the place and saving the original use for the rooms, and trying to give people the best Montana hospitality possible,” said Wickens.

Wickens met building owner Cory Lawrence about seven years ago when Lawrence was sponsoring events at Wickens' other musical brainchild, Live from the Divide. Lawrence bought the Armory in 2012 and worked with Wickens to make his dream of a downtown venue and hotel a reality. This summer, it will serve as the town's only indoor concert venue—the Elm in Midtown will open in September 2021.

“Having the Armory Music Hall on property aligns with our commitment to creating highly local and one-of-a-kind experiences for guests,” said Courtney Reeves, director of sales and marketing at Kimpton Armory Hotel. “From



Famed country musician Kip Moore performs at the Armory Music Hall in March 2021. PHOTO BY ORANGE PHOTOGRAPHIE

the moment guests walk through our doors, it's important for them to feel like they are experiencing the unique elements that celebrate Bozeman. Music is a key component of this idea as it allows guests to experience the sounds of our great state and hometown.”

In March, the music hall hosted Nashville-based country singer/songwriter Kip Moore, and it will kick off a dynamic summer season with the Allman Betts Band, the Love Junkies and Robert Earl Keen July 25.

The opening of the venue has been an experiment, but a successful one, says Wickens. In addition to hosting shows, they are launching a Mountain Artists in Residence program, through which performers will, using the Armory as their home base, tour Yellowstone National Park and the surrounding area's offerings so that once they're on stage, the artists are as much in love with Montana as the audience members. Their first performers to experience Mountain AIR will be the Love Junkies July 16 and 17.

“We want them to reset and connect and do shows here after they fall in love with Montana,” said Wickens. “We're proud of that. It's new and it's a

heavy lift but it's just the right thing to do and it really reflects on the character of this building and on Kimpton—going above and beyond the hospitality and experience.”

Another unique partnership Wickens has engaged in with the MusiCares Foundation. MusiCares is the nonprofit partnered with the Grammys and provides critical health and welfare services in the form of emergency financial aid, mental health assistance and much more to the performing arts community. The Armory Music Hall will be donating a percentage of every ticket sale to MusiCares.

Along the wall of the venue's entryway, the first things guests will see are a row of Bozeman-made Gibson acoustic guitars in their cases. Gibson Guitars, who are in the middle of a massive expansion, which will add 25,000 square feet to their current facility, is working with the Armory Music Hall to bring in some Gibson family artists.

“We're trying to show [people] that the Gibson experience is maybe more of an experience than us putting a guitar in your hand,” said John Hannigan, Gibson's brand manager. “We can contribute to music here locally by partnering with someone like the Armory Music Hall.”

During its participation in wartime, what is now the Armory Music Hall functioned as a stage on which Sherman tanks would practice maneuvers. Today, the hall appears a bit more elegant, but not without the Art Deco features that Willson originally designed. In its iterations to present day, the hall and building as a whole were preserved with intention and the juxtaposed masculine military building and fine art pieces hanging in its interior perhaps best communicate the span of experiences you may have while visiting.

“The whole ambiance is definitely there,” said Connelley. “We keep using the words ‘elevated’ and ‘exclusive’ but [the building] really lends itself to that with all the intention, that every step from when it was just a dream to what we're standing in right now, to when people are sitting in their seats. Everybody feels it. And that's what you walk away with, is just all those little details that somebody paid attention to that you might not notice—but if they weren't there, you may.”

The details Connelley speaks of are everything—the performance, lights, sound, art features and the building itself, all crescendoing into a seamless performance. The Armory Music Hall promises to “not be any one thing,” said Wickens. So, as you walk inside—whether for the first of fourth time—you just never know how you'll be transformed.



The Kimpton Armory Hotel rose from the original, two-story Armory building, designed by architect Fred F. Willson. PHOTO BY ORANGE PHOTOGRAPHIE



Musician Spotlight: Wes Urbaniak

Folk musician follows non-traditional path to playing and creating instruments

BY JULIA BARTON

BIG SKY – Wes Urbaniak grew up with limited access to instruments, but his early fascination for music led him to find creative ways of pursuing his passion.

Urbaniak spent winters as a child in the remote far north of North Dakota's Turtle Mountains, a place he described as strange, both geographically and otherwise. After hunkering down for winters, Urbaniak and his family were somewhat nomadic travelers in the warmer months.

"In the summertime, we were like half-gypsy travelers," Urbaniak said. "That's how the people I lived with made their money for the winter."

These travels were a far cry from the isolation of winter, Urbaniak went on to explain, immersing him fully in many different groups of people and cultures over the course of the summer.

Somewhere along his journey, Urbaniak had a babysitter with a piano in her house. Although this was the first instrument he had access to, he was only allowed to play quiet enough that his sitter couldn't hear him. Urbaniak taped a stethoscope to the soundboard of the piano, allowing him to hear soft strokes on the keys while keeping the house virtually silent.

"I would play quietly... writing these little songs, and that's when I knew I wanted to be a songwriter," Urbaniak said.

The piano was soon replaced in Urbaniak's world by a guitar that was missing two



Wes Urbaniak became fascinated with music at a young age and he makes his own stringed instruments. PHOTO COURTESY OF WES URBANIAK

strings, which he played that way for a year before being able to upgrade to a full, six string guitar.

Now well-versed in an array of stringed instruments—all of which can be played at full volume and possess the proper amount of strings—Urbaniak has settled in Big Sky, making and performing music both as a solo artist and as part of his band, Wes Urbaniak and the Mountain Folk.

Urbaniak's music is deeply rooted in the mountains, with the folk genre acting as a throughline between the different styles supplied by the variety of instruments he integrates into his body of work. The musician broke his fair share of instruments, and did his best to repair them in whatever way possible, ultimately unveiling the possibility of building them from scratch on his own.

"I probably built seven guitars until I had a functional one," Urbaniak said. "But I have always been dedicated to this idea of not knowing and doing it anyway."

When he's not playing music, Urbaniak now bides his time working as the general manager for ACRE Kitchen in Big Sky or handcrafting stringed instruments. "I always had this weird feeling about using wood and cutting down our forests," Urbaniak said of making instruments, which ultimately led him to recycling the wood of 100-year-old pianos into his creations.

Urbaniak will be playing around the Big Sky and Bozeman area this summer, including at the Big Sky Farmers Market on July 14, and as part of Friday Afternoon Club at Blue Buddha Sushi Lounge.

Artist Spotlight: Robyn Thayer

Multimedia artist uses childhood creativity to form adult career

BY JULIA BARTON

EVERGREEN, COLORADO — Robyn Thayer is an artist fueled by the desire to create with a childlike sense of wonder and make the world a more beautiful place one large scale piece of artwork at a time.

Born and raised in Northern Minnesota, Thayer was encouraged from a young age by her family to pursue her imaginative ambitions. The young artist was equipped with a variety of art supplies—her favorite being wiggly eyes and glue—and space to explore both at a craft table and in the outdoors.

"I didn't have any formal training at all, it was purely organic," Thayer said of her artistic beginnings, fostering within herself a fierce passion for creating.

While she was studying to become a doctor, art was how Thayer managed her stress. Some of her acrylic paintings and collages ended up in a hometown gallery during this time, where she was encouraged to create more and had her first art show. "At one point the demand for my art had grown so much that I knew I needed to do this and only this," Thayer said. "Really just a beautiful journey."



Robyn Thayer's bright and eclectic art is her way of emoting and processing life. PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBYN THAYER.

As her skills became more refined, Thayer continued drawing from how she learned to make art. She primarily works with large pieces using a variety of supplies, often painting on canvases with acrylics, sometimes cutting things apart before meticulously rearranging the pieces and glueing them together, then finishes with charcoals and crayons on top.

"I emote and process life through color," Thayer explained. "I think of it more like art journaling—I just explore."

Whether it is when she's enjoying time with her husband and two children, or dealing with pandemic grief while in lockdown, Thayer's emotions always find their way into her art. Art is what makes her the happiest, she admits, and her happiest art is what sells the best.

"My mission is to brighten people's lives," Thayer said. "I feel like our hearts are the living rooms of our lives, and if we're not tending to that space, nothing else really matters. It's the same with the living rooms of our houses, and it's an honor to have my art shine that out in people's living space."

Thayer bases this mission out of her home studio in Colorado, sometimes working on up to 20 pieces of art at a time. She is represented by the Ahmyo River Gallery in Sante Fe, New Mexico and at Mountain Home in Evergreen, Colorado; her art will also be featured at the Big Sky Art Auction on July 14-18.



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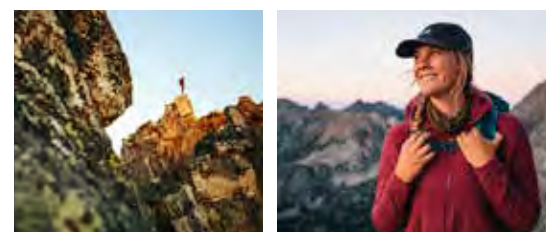
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Amuse-bouche refers to an appetizer, and by French translation means, "to entertain the mouth." It offers a glimpse into what you should expect from a meal. Also it's free, compliments of the chef.

Unfortunately, due to staffing issues ...



BY SCOTT MECHURA
EBS FOOD COLUMNIST

You've seen the signs.

"Unfortunately, due to a lack of staff, we are closed today. We apologize and hope to re-open soon."

Or some version of that.

For those in the culinary industry who survived last year's shutdowns, the second of this one-two punch is that so many of us aren't able to fully capitalize on the tourism revenue flowing through the valley, and judging by what I can tell, 2021 is looking like it could be the biggest tourism year to date—at least in the Montana counties and valleys with larger cities who are close to national parks.

On these signs, some restaurants even post a phone number inviting applicants to apply, but as I visit with my peers on a regular basis, they all say the same thing: There are no applicants. No one is interested.

And while it's human social nature to feel like you have it worse than everyone else, it sure does feel like restaurants—specifically restaurant kitchens—have been the hardest hit. Two of our locations have been added to the list of restaurants that cannot open seven days a week.

According to the American Heritage Dictionary, here are some key words that define what an epidemic is: Spreading rapidly and extensively. Affecting many individuals in an area or population at the same time. Widely prevalent. An outbreak that spreads rapidly and widely.

I'd say the employment challenge we are facing matches with most every word of that. We are facing an epidemic.

All of this has had me asking the same questions for months:

Where is everybody? Are they hiding in plain sight?

Are potential employees among the droves of people filling every business as a customer but not as part of the work force? Joining in conversations about how people are being paid to stay home, all the while assimilating frustrated people who are working like the humans in "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" who were able to blend in with the aliens?

Take notice when you are out and about. Long before the summer tourism season began, everyone and everything was just busier: Hospitality, Target, Costco, parks and even golf courses.

But we also have the added challenge of a housing shortage.

When I moved here 21 years ago, there was a faucet of employees that didn't seem to turn off. Cooks and dishwashers were plentiful. They skied or rode the mountain by day, or mountain biked, and worked in a kitchen by night. It was the life everyone wanted, and a balance was maintained.

The first and sometimes only question from a prospective cook or dishwasher was whether or not we provided a ski pass. But in recent years, that question changed to whether or not we provided housing.

Countless times I have had cooks or dishwashers unable to accept a job because we either didn't provide or were already full in our employee housing.

This has had a profound effect on virtually every restaurant I know. It changes what is on our menu, how we cook, what we cook, when we are open, and what our prices are. It has caused us to completely rethink what a restaurant looks like and how it operates.

I yearn for a day when I do not see one irritated or deflated person turned away at a restaurant when they read the sign on a restaurant door telling them the kitchen is closed.

Scott Mechura has spent a life in the hospitality industry. He is a former certified beer judge and currently the multi-concept culinary director for a Bozeman based restaurant group.

American Life In Poetry

BY KWAME DAWS

In this typically plain-spoken poem by North Carolina poet, Terri Kirby Erickson, from her new collection, *A Sun Inside my Chest*, there is, humming below the still surface of language, a rich pulse of hope, of everyday survival—a body’s defiance that she captures in that final image.

New Bathing Suit

BY TERRI KIRBY ERICKSON

My friend is wearing her new black bathing suit. It came with the proper cups, made to fill with one breast and the memory of another—which is not to say emptiness—but the fullness that comes to us, with sacrifice. There is no one more alive than she is now, floating like a lotus or swimming, lap after lap, parting the turquoise, chlorine-scented water, her arms as sturdy as wooden paddles. And when she pulls herself from the pool, her new suit dripping—the pulse is so strong in her wrists and throat, a little bird outside the window will hear it, begin to flap its wings to the beat of her heart.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

<p>ACROSS</p> <p>1 Olive genus 5 Congregation (abbr.) 9 Heights (abbr.) 12 Entry 13 Spoken 14 Exclamation 15 N. Afr. jackal 16 Jap. food alga 17 Babism founder 18 Cereal grain or grass 20 Underwrite 22 Lava 25 Carriage 26 Pioneered 27 Liquid crystal display (abbr.) 29 Strange 33 Forest ox 35 Pitch 37 Quintillionth (pref.) 38 Wattle tree 40 Month abbr. 42 Quadrant</p>	<p>43 Cricket field parts 45 Fifteenth-century helmet 47 Sigil 50 Test 51 Father: Arabic 52 Midianite king 54 Sprint 58 Cheer 59 Insect 60 Yesterday (Ital.) 61 Department of Natural Resources (abbr.) 62 Past 63 Of the kind of (suf.)</p>	<p>ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>A</td><td>S</td><td>S</td><td>E</td><td>M</td><td>O</td><td>N</td><td>S</td><td>N</td><td>M</td><td>I</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>K</td><td>E</td><td>G</td><td>I</td><td>M</td><td>B</td><td>U</td><td>A</td><td>A</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>H</td><td>A</td><td>R</td><td>M</td><td>N</td><td>A</td><td>S</td><td>I</td><td>C</td><td>O</td><td>R</td><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>R</td><td>O</td><td>T</td><td>O</td><td>R</td><td>T</td><td>A</td><td>S</td><td>K</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>U</td><td>R</td><td>A</td><td>N</td><td>U</td><td>S</td><td>G</td><td>O</td><td>B</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>B</td><td>U</td><td>T</td><td>T</td><td>E</td><td>E</td><td>A</td><td>R</td><td>T</td><td>R</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>S</td><td>E</td><td>G</td><td>A</td><td>B</td><td>R</td><td>E</td><td>L</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>R</td><td>A</td><td>D</td><td>R</td><td>A</td><td>N</td><td>F</td><td>A</td><td>I</td><td>A</td><td>L</td></tr> <tr><td>M</td><td>E</td><td>G</td><td>J</td><td>U</td><td>M</td><td>A</td><td>D</td><td>A</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>O</td><td>B</td><td>O</td><td>E</td><td>G</td><td>A</td><td>L</td><td>E</td><td>N</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>H</td><td>O</td><td>E</td><td>F</td><td>O</td><td>R</td><td>M</td><td>L</td><td>G</td><td>T</td><td>H</td></tr> <tr><td>A</td><td>N</td><td>A</td><td>E</td><td>R</td><td>I</td><td>E</td><td>I</td><td>L</td><td>E</td><td>A</td></tr> <tr><td>C</td><td>E</td><td>R</td><td>R</td><td>O</td><td>S</td><td>S</td><td>A</td><td>E</td><td>R</td><td>I</td></tr> </table>	A	S	S	E	M	O	N	S	N	M	I	S	K	E	G	I	M	B	U	A	A	A	H	A	R	M	N	A	S	I	C	O	R	N	R	O	T	O	R	T	A	S	K			U	R	A	N	U	S	G	O	B			B	U	T	T	E	E	A	R	T	R	E	E	S	E	G	A	B	R	E	L			R	A	D	R	A	N	F	A	I	A	L	M	E	G	J	U	M	A	D	A			O	B	O	E	G	A	L	E	N			S	H	O	E	F	O	R	M	L	G	T	H	A	N	A	E	R	I	E	I	L	E	A	C	E	R	R	O	S	S	A	E	R	I
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5 Touch
6 Gold (Sp.)
7 Nose openings
8 "Wizard of Oz" witch
9 Jap. pit viper
10 Asian desert
11 Kemo</p> | <p>19 Trouble
21 Pithy plant
22 Large piece
23 Common (pref.)
24 Stench
28 Arabic letter
30 Italic (abbr.)
31 To be (Fr.)
32 Night (pref.)
34 Time period
36 Reiterate
39 Pep
41 Lobster box
44 Office worker's skill
46 Land of Croesus
47 Orange-red stone
48 Dayak people
49 Earth deposit in rock cavities
53 Legal profession
55 At the age of (Lat.)
56 Hindu title
57 This one (Lat.)</p> |
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Corner Quote

“Now I see the secret of making the best person, it is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the earth.”

—Walt Whitman

BIG SKY BEATS

Fourth of July Jams

BY JULIA BARTON

The Fourth of July is a quintessential summer celebration of America’s independence, best spent in the company of family and friends. However you plan to enjoy your weekend—perhaps outside with some kind of grilled entree and cold beverage in hand—here are some tunes to set you up for a successful Fourth of July weekend.



1. “American Girl” by Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers
2. “Chicken Fried” by Zac Brown Band
3. “Back In The U.S.A.” by Chuck Berry
4. “All Summer Long” by Kid Rock
5. “American Kids” by Kenny Chesney
6. “All American Girl” by Carrie Underwood
7. “Jack and Diane” by John Mellencamp
8. “Made in America” by Toby Keith
9. “Surfin’ U.S.A.” by the Beach Boys
10. “American Woman” by Lenny Kravitz

BACK 40

For Explore Big Sky, the Back 40 is a resource: a place where we can delve into subjects and ask experts to share their knowledge. Here, we highlight stories from our flagship sister publication Mountain Outlaw magazine.

Noun: wild or rough terrain adjacent to a developed area **Origin:** shortened form of “back 40 acres”

The Catch and Release of Joe Brooks

How the Father of Modern-Day Fly Fishing saved himself

BY MICHAEL SOMERBY

It was January of 1955 when Joe Brooks first cast into the rich waters of Argentina’s Tierra del Fuego, astonishing the native onlookers. The archipelago, on South America’s southernmost tip, is famous for gusting sea winds so powerful that trees warp into permanently mangled, unnatural forms; casting a fly with any semblance of precision was unheard of, yet Brooks rolled out cast after cast on target. He then doubled down on the spectacle, landing a monster sea-run brown trout, and proceeded with the unthinkable—releasing it, alive, back into the water.

“His casting and his ability to fight the winds blew these Argentinians away,” said Joseph Brooks, Joe Brooks’ great nephew. “They fished with a ‘catch it, kill it’ belief, so for him to release this impressive of a fish was inconceivable.”

Joe Brooks was a prolific American angler, a pioneer of modern-day fly fishing, who pushed the envelope on what was thought possible with a fly rod, untethering the sport from decades of worn-out convention. His ascension was a lifelong one marked by passion for adventure and respect for game fish and the environs they inhabited, but also by a generosity of spirit that influenced anyone who encountered it.

Brooks mentored the likes of Bing Crosby, Jack Nicklaus and Red Sox great Ted Williams, as well as fly fishing legends Lefty Kreh and Stu Apte, the latter dubbing him “a second father”; he played a pivotal role in the founding of The Brotherhood of the Jungle Cock, an organization dedicated to bringing the joys of fishing to young men with an emphasis on promoting conservation. Brooks also wrote about his experiences, publishing missives in simple, charming prose for the likes of *Field and Stream*, *The Baltimore Sun* and *Outdoor Life*—his ability to communicate fly fishing and its transcendental splendors led to written works still considered leading gospel by the sport’s patrons.

“He’s just one of those people that had that charisma, a wonderful and generous man,” said John Bailey, proprietor and son of the eponymous founder of Dan Bailey’s Fly Shop in Livingston, Montana. “He just impacted fishing so deeply, and in so many ways.”

Yet, in true hero’s fashion, Brooks’ road to legend revealed an imperfect character. By 1930, many thought Brooks was dead, and like so many marred souls, he’d once shown tremendous promise. A natural-born athlete, at just 17 years old Brooks was a top prospect for the Baltimore Orioles. He’d been admitted into Princeton University (albeit briefly, getting the boot after just one semester), and had married into the Dickey clan, one of the most prestigious and wealthy families in the Mid-Atlantic.

Despite these gifts of character and aptitude, his charmed life unraveled into seemingly irreversible turmoil. Brooks abused his newfound social status gained in marriage, raging through the roaring ’20s with little acknowledgement of his mounting troubles with alcoholism and a penchant for brawling. Brooks and the distinguished debutante Arline Dickey divorced four years after their marriage, and as the glimmering prosperity of the decade was replaced by the Great Depression of the 1930s, so too did the sheen disappear from Brooks—he vanished, without a trace, into the sadness that blanched the spirit of a once-proud American people.

Lore surrounds those mysterious years. Brooks is rumored to have played semi-pro football in California. Another tale has him assisting an elderly man with a trapping outfit in remote Michigan. Some claim he was among the earliest competitors in a precursor to the multibillion faux-wrestling industry, grappling in the Lumberjack Circuit of Minnesota. He would speak little of that time. What is known is that Brooks eventually landed in Toronto’s

Wood Sanatorium, a secretive and experimental facility dedicated to treating alcoholism as a disease and not a moral defect, among the first of its kind.

Released for a second chance at life, a sober 36-year-old Brooks chased respite by fishing the eddies of Maryland’s streams and rivers, a gentler pastime of a younger self. It was a rekindled passion that transformed Brooks from a pariah into a celebrated god of fly fishing, definitively securing him a throne in sport’s pantheon, and allowed a once-dormant kindness to blossom.

“I think my life was altered by knowing Joe Brooks, absolutely,” said Stu Apte, a fellow fly-fishing hall of famer and renowned author. “Spending time with Joe, trying to emulate him, made me a better person.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF WARNER MUSIC GROUP.



Brooks smiling upon a brown trout on a Brotherhood of the Jungle Cock outing in Maryland. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE JOE BROOKS FOUNDATION.

Those who fly fish know the sport is imbued with a tacit mysticism and reverence for wildlife other sects of fishing struggle to achieve. Fly fishing requires the angler to imitate nature with such precision as to join it. There is no room for compromise, presentation must be near perfect and, when refraining from over-tackling with heavy synthetics, a hard credo of Brooks', the engagement is one of fairness and respect; no contest between man and beast is so undecided from first strike.

"When you're fishing with 20-plus-pound test [fishing line], unless you completely fatigue there's just no way you can lose that fight. The fish will never break the line," said Brooks' great nephew Joseph, who together with brother Michael produced the 2018 documentary, *Finding Joe Brooks*. "But when you're fly fishing, there's this sense that either side could win. It's a fair contest, and Joe valued that."

Joe Brooks' regard for game fish extended beyond the fight. A true sportsman of well-made integrity, Brooks allowed his opponent to fight again in an act known as "catch and release," a measure of grace he passed unto his Argentinian companions under sheets of rain and howling wind in 1955. Some could argue his greatest contributions were realized in far-flung nations, fishing not only fresh water but also brackish and salt, and landing record-sized species previously thought impossible to catch on a fly. Yet it's that ethos, popularizing the release of what was landed, that made Brooks remarkable.

"I think it speaks to his character, one-hundred percent a reflection of the regard he held the resource in," said Flip Pallot, a student of Brooks' best-known disciple, fly-fishing legend Lefty Kreh.

Brooks' understanding of what it meant to fight for life was intimate, and so the concept of catch and release was tailor-made. Perhaps Brooks saw himself in conquered fish, summoning bitter memories of a time spent floundering in the throes of a former self. Brooks understood even those with nothing left to give, in a state of complete and total vulnerability, should be honored with a second chance.

Joe Brooks spent the late summers and autumns of his final years in Montana's Paradise Valley, fishing the untamed rivers lined with quaking aspens and cottonwoods. He would die there in September of 1972, mere weeks after telling friends that when the time was right he wanted to "die with a fly rod in hand, facing upstream." Not many get to choose the way they perish, as Brooks did. And he spent his last hours releasing trout and giving them the chance to fight again.



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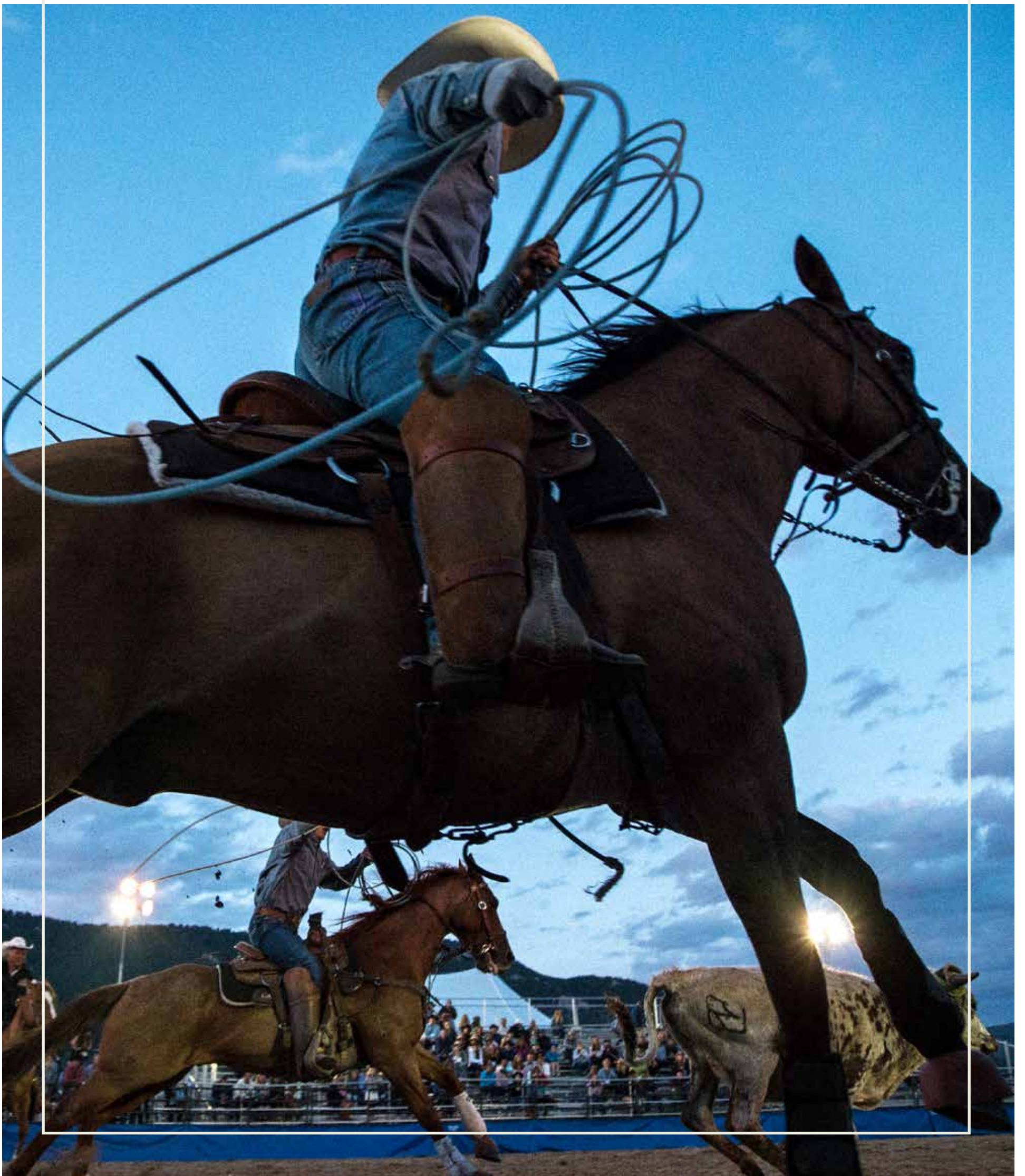
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LEADING UP TO BIG SKY'S BIGGEST WEEK

With Big Sky PBR on the horizon, Outlaw Partners is kicking off a week of festivities with the Big Sky Art Auction, the Big Sky Community Rodeo and the Big Sky Community Street Dance. Grab your hat and your boots; it's time to ride.



Community rodeo returns to Big Sky

Dirt Wire to cap off the night with Street Dance

BY BELLA BUTLER

BIG SKY – Before skiers and fly fishermen stepped into the forefront of Montana's identity, the cowboy was the embodiment of the West. Nowadays, long summer nights in the state are spent celebrating the culture and majesty of these Western roots with rodeos. On July 16, one such rodeo will ride into Big Sky to kick off a week of festivities leading up to the Big Sky PBR.

In its second year, the Big Sky Community Rodeo will bring acclaimed rodeo athletes from Montana State University as well as other competitors from around the region to Big Sky for an exciting night leading up to the Big Sky Community Street Dance and a performance by the nationally touring band Dirtwire. The street dance and rodeo will help launch Big Sky's Biggest Week, a series of events leading up to the Big Sky PBR.

The rodeo, put on by Outlaw Partners, publisher of this newspaper, and the Yellowstone Club, will bring the family-friendly crowd prime seats to watch MSU rodeo athletes compete in events like bareback and saddle bronc riding, roping and steer wrestling, among others.

"We're excited to partner with the Yellowstone Club again in 2021 to bring this event to the community of Big Sky," said Outlaw Partners VP of Events Ennion Williams. "This event showcases college rodeo talent, which is a different format from Big Sky PBR," he added, highlighting the diversity in events presented as part of Big Sky's Biggest Week.

In June, the MSU Rodeo Team vied for a national title to cap off an already successful season at the College National Finals Rodeo in Casper, Wyoming. The women's team victoriously brought the national title back to Bozeman—its first since 2011—and the men's team claimed 11th place. After being distinguished as the best in the nation, a handful of these reputable athletes will provide Big Sky with what MSU Rodeo Head Coach Andy Bolich thinks will be "an action-packed rodeo."

"It's a really small arena and all the seats are right there close to the action and so I think it'll be a really fun rodeo experience," Bolich said. "As far as rodeo arenas are concerned, they don't get much closer than that one."

Bolich, who qualified for the national rodeo with MSU for four years before graduating in 2003 and joining the coaching staff, expressed how rodeo goes beyond sport. "All the things that the Western lifestyle has to offer is kind of



Dirtwire, an experimental trio, will play on the LMNT Hydration stage at the Big Sky Community Street Dance. PHOTO BY MIKA GUROVICH

showcased into a rodeo," he said. When families show up to a rodeo, they're not only watching great athletes, Bolich suggested, but also traditional cowboys.

Anyone who's been to a rodeo knows the excitement and adrenaline felt while exiting the arena. This year, Outlaw Partners and sponsoring partner LMNT Hydration will offer a chance to keep the party alive with the Big Sky Community Street Dance.

Dirtwire, a band self-described as "back-porch space cowboy blues, swamp-tropica and electro-twang," will perform on a closed-off stretch of Town Center Avenue with a unique energy and sound that only the West Coast group could bring.

The experimental band brings a variety of instruments to the stage, from banjos to things you've likely never heard of like a West African kamala ngonis, to marry music styles from around the globe.

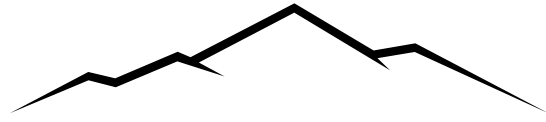
"We are grateful to LMNT Hydration for bringing us a nationally recognized band for the community to enjoy after the Big Sky Community Rodeo," Williams said, expressing excitement at the idea of congregating for live music once again.

The rodeo will begin at 6 p.m. and the street dance will follow at 9 p.m.

Both community rodeo and street dance tickets are available for purchase at bigskypbr.com. For more information on these events and Big Sky's Biggest Week, download the Outlaw Partners app.



A group of cowboys ride through the arena at the 2019 Big Sky Community Rodeo. OUTLAW PARTNERS PHOTO



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Big Sky Art Auction celebrates year six

BIG SKY – It's nearly here. Beginning Wednesday, July 14, the Wilson Plaza in Big Sky Town Center will be bustling with artists and art admirers during the sixth annual Big Sky Art Auction. This year's event runs through Sunday, July 18 and features more than 100 curated pieces of art, furniture and jewelry.

Audi Bozeman is submitting a one of a kind, "Big Sky Edition" Audi SQ5 Prestige Quattro. A portion of the proceeds from this auction item will support Habitat for Humanity. Bidding will begin at 11 a.m. Wednesday morning and end at 6 p.m. Sunday and participants will be able to bid throughout the weekend and follow the auction on the Auctria app on Apple or Google Play.

EBS spoke to some of the auction's featured artisans and galleries so you can learn about their craft before visiting them in person under the big white tents. Special thanks to sponsors, Courtney Collins Fine Art Gallery, Audi Bozeman, Jackson Hole Jewelry and Old Main Gallery & Framing.

Artist profiles were edited for brevity. Read the full versions at explorebigsky.com.

—Mira Brody



Out of Africa in Montana

fwodart.com

Out of Africa In Montana Gallery in Bozeman specializes in collections of sporting, falconry, African and North American wildlife, and Western Fine Art. Upon entry, you'll be faced with beautiful pieces from worldwide artists such as Simon Combs, Bob Kuhn and Julie Jeppsen. Just as many visitors to the area come to Montana to



experience the presence of wildlife, visitors to the gallery will be graced with the same force of presence among their likenesses.

Out of Africa in Montana is owned by Skip Tubbs and located at 1050 E. Main St. in Bozeman. Tubbs has been an advocate for wildlife conservation for most of his life and that passion shines through in his gallery.

"The conservation groups are excited to support the art that shows what they're trying to support and preserve," said gallery manager Patty Boyd. "Without the conservation dollars that the hunter provide a lot of these habitats aren't going to be able to be conserved."

The gallery's roots began 40 years ago in 1980 as Artist Union Editions, a framing shop in the Downtowner Mall on Willson Avenue, then later as Framework Designs when they moved to Main Street in 1982. Around 1983, the frame shop began representing original print and etching artists in small art shows to benefit wildlife conservation efforts in the area. Tubbs' travels to Africa inspired him to begin representing African artwork, and in the mid 1990s, the Out of Africa In Montana Gallery took shape as a separate entity.

Out of Africa In Montana Gallery joins the Big Sky Art Auction for the second time this summer, providing an eclectic variety of pieces including a Navajo rug and modern paintings.

"I'm excited," Boyd said. "I want quality work in there for the bidder to choose from, I want the artist to be supported doing what they're born to do, and I also want the auction to win because I want the auction to continue every year."

Norseman Designs West

norsemandesignswest.com

John Gallis is 71 but he doesn't see himself retiring anytime soon. He loves what he does, and has been fortunate enough to make a living from it. The Long Island, New York native has been a professional woodworker for nearly 50 years, crafting artistic, functional furniture with inspirations from nature.

His woodworking career began out of high school when he found that he was best at expressing himself through his hands. He was the chief cabinetmaker at Bloomingdales, but made the move to Cody, Wyoming after he and his wife at the time came out west to visit his brother-in-law, who was working as a coal miner in Gillette, Wyoming. After a month-long road trip, he was hooked by the open land, clean air and blue skies.

"I thought I was smart," Gallis jokes of the harsh climate, lamenting that his Harley Davidson is still under wraps in April. "I looked on the map and saw we're at the same longitude as Long Island, but I didn't factor in the 5,000 feet of elevation."

They made the move in 1996 and for a while he worked for a local furniture maker until he opened his own line of award-winning high-end western furniture under the name Norseman Designs West. He and his wife raised four children and all still live in the area.

Gallis is in good company in Cody—the town is the original home of the Western Design Conference, which is he still involved with. He's also a member of By Western Hands, whose mission is "To educate, conserve, and perpetuate the legacy of western design and craftsmanship." You can see his work on their website or in their showroom in Cody.



Gallis lives and breathes woodworking. He enjoys incorporating different textures into his pieces and says the gratifying aspect of being a three dimensional artist is being able to watch someone interact with his work. He was fortunate to be able to attend the Big Sky Art Auction last summer with By Western Hands and looks forward to attending again this year.



David Ruimveld Art
davidruimveldstudio.com

Thirty-five years ago, David Ruimveld caught a Landlock salmon so nice he decided to paint it. He framed his painting, alongside the fly he had used to catch it, and hung it in the restaurant he owned at the time. By chance, a well-known Michigan painter known as R. Scott, came in one day, saw the painting, and invited Ruimveld to his

studio. The experience was so inspiring, Ruimveld decided to pursue painting as a full-time career.

He paints with acrylic in a watercolor style called “washes,” which adds to the organic and wild nature of his subjects. He specializes in images of angling, sporting and wildlife art and his work has been recognized in galleries, fly shops and homes across the country. Just like his first painting in that restaurant, Ruimveld often incorporates flies into his finished pieces.

“Fly fishing has many aspects to the sport, but you can not fly fish without the flies,” Ruimveld said. “When I attend the shows most of my angling art that is sold or commissioned by clients has or is requested that I place the flies in the shadow boxes below the painting. Art needs to tell a story or rekindle a memory. The flies add to this story.”

Inspiration comes in nature—while casting flies, watching trout rise out of the water for a bite or following his bird dog on a hunt. It’s the small movements, he describes, like the intensity of his dog, or the gentle light falling on the river.

Jill Garber Couture

jillgarber.com

When you’re trying on one of Jill Garber’s jewelry pieces, you’re most likely wearing more than a bracelet, earrings or necklace. You’re wearing a piece of history. Garber founded Jill Garber Couture in 2008, drawing inspiration from artistic periods of history, antique jewelry and objects d’art design, a style dating back to the 17th century.

Garber grew up in Saginaw, Michigan, and Sarasota, Florida, and moved to New York, New York, to attend Parsons School of Design in 1972, and then Los Angeles, California where she lived until 2004. Her educational background is in jewelry, fashion and product design as well as design licensing. She also credits her parents for inspiration and encouragement through her career—her father was an entrepreneur and her mother, an artist.

Garber’s works can be viewed and tried on at the Courtney Collins Fine Art gallery in the Big Sky Town Center Tuesday through Saturday from 12 to 5 p.m. Gallery owner Courtney Collins can help you select, and try on a piece.

“I am touched and somewhat humbled when I interface with admirers of my work,” Garber told EBS in an email. “I consider it an honor and privilege to create beautiful things, as well as to have led my entire life working in the arts and design—it is a joy to discuss the many details and stories that surround my work with those who are interested.”

Garber channels her unique artistic perspective into her creations, which is why they have evolved over the years. She hopes her pieces instill in their wearers those same creative powers. Garber has participated in the Big Sky Arts Auction in previous years through Courtney Collins, an event she sees as an opportunity to connect with other artists and patrons.

“I think it is important to encourage and enlighten people as to what is taking place in the arts, and support these efforts in every community,” Garber said. “I also believe it is important to provide a professional platform that is involved in communities throughout the world, for artists to display their works and engage with others in their field.”



Averi Iris Art

averiirisart.com

Montana-raised artist Averi Iris Smith takes inspiration from natural surroundings, turning local landscapes and wildlife into colorful paintings. Initially from Missoula, Smith is a sophomore at Gallatin High School in Bozeman, finding time between her studies and three sports to paint the things she loves.

Smith took to art from a young age, drawing at first with her grandfather, and moving to paints at the age of 10. Now 16, the young artist fell in love with acrylic, painting realistic portraiture of animals that her mother, Jill Smith, would show off to her friends. This led to



a series of pet commissions and, most notably, a large bison painting that requested the use of colorful paints. Upon finishing, Smith couldn’t stay away from the brightly colored paints she had utilized in the piece, and has been incorporating them into her work ever since.

“I like to paint the closer places, the ones that feel like home,” Smith said, reflecting on landscape pieces she has done, featuring Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks as well as the Bridger Range. Even the colors she uses are often inspired by Montana sunsets and vistas, Smith says.

The painter finds influence in both subject and technique through the works of other Montana-based artists including Julie T. Chapman, Colt Idol and Rachel Pohl. After finding her start in acrylic paints, Smith saw a gallery showing of oil paintings and began experimenting with the medium in more abstract pieces. Now, a combination of acrylic and oil paintings make up Smith’s body of work.

Despite balancing her time between the soccer field, basketball and tennis courts, and the classroom, Smith always makes time to create art that can be seen all over the state. Smith won the 2020 Sweet Pea Festival poster contest, has work displayed in the Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport and is Sage Lodge’s featured artist.

Robyn Thayer

robynthayer.com

Robyn Thayer is an artist fueled by the desire to create with a childlike sense of wonder and make the world a more beautiful place one large-scale piece of artwork at a time.

Born and raised in Northern Minnesota, Thayer was encouraged from a young age by her family to pursue her imaginative ambitions. The young artist was equipped with a variety of art supplies—her favorite being wiggly eyes and glue—and space to explore both at a craft table and in the outdoors. While she was studying to become a doctor, art was how Thayer managed her stress.

As her skills became more refined, Thayer continued drawing from how she learned to make art. She primarily works with large pieces using a variety of supplies, often painting canvasses with acrylics, sometimes cutting things apart before meticulously rearranging the pieces and gluing them together, and uses charcoals and crayons on top.



“I emote and process life through color,” Thayer explained. “I think of it more like art journaling—I just explore.”

Whether it is when she’s enjoying time with her husband and two children, or dealing with pandemic grief while in lockdown, Thayer’s emotions always find their way into her art. Art is what makes her the happiest, she admits, and her happiest art is what sells the best.

“My mission is to brighten people’s lives,” Thayer said. “I feel like our hearts are the living rooms of our lives, and if we’re not tending to that space, nothing else really matters. It’s the same with the living rooms of our houses, and it’s an honor to have my art shine that out in people’s living space.”

Community bingo night to commemorate the late Dick Allgood, raise funds for schools

Local band Dammit Lauren! to follow

BY JULIA BARTON

BIG SKY —The Dick Allgood Inaugural Community Bingo Night will commemorate a legendary local on July 20 and raise funds for community schools with live music from Dammit Lauren! to follow.

Allgood, who passed away from lung cancer last winter in his Bozeman home, was a Vietnam War Air Force veteran, owner of Allgood's Bar and Grill in Big Sky for 18 years, active American Legion Post 99 member and all-around involved community member since his arrival to Big Sky in 1992.

The bingo night, an installment in Big Sky's Biggest Week festivities leading up to the Big Sky PBR, will take place at the Basecamp tent across from the Wilson Hotel on Tuesday, July 20, beginning at 6 p.m. There will be a slew of tasty snacks and beverages as well as a 50/50 raffle during the event with the goal of raising



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAMMIT LAUREN AND THE WELL.

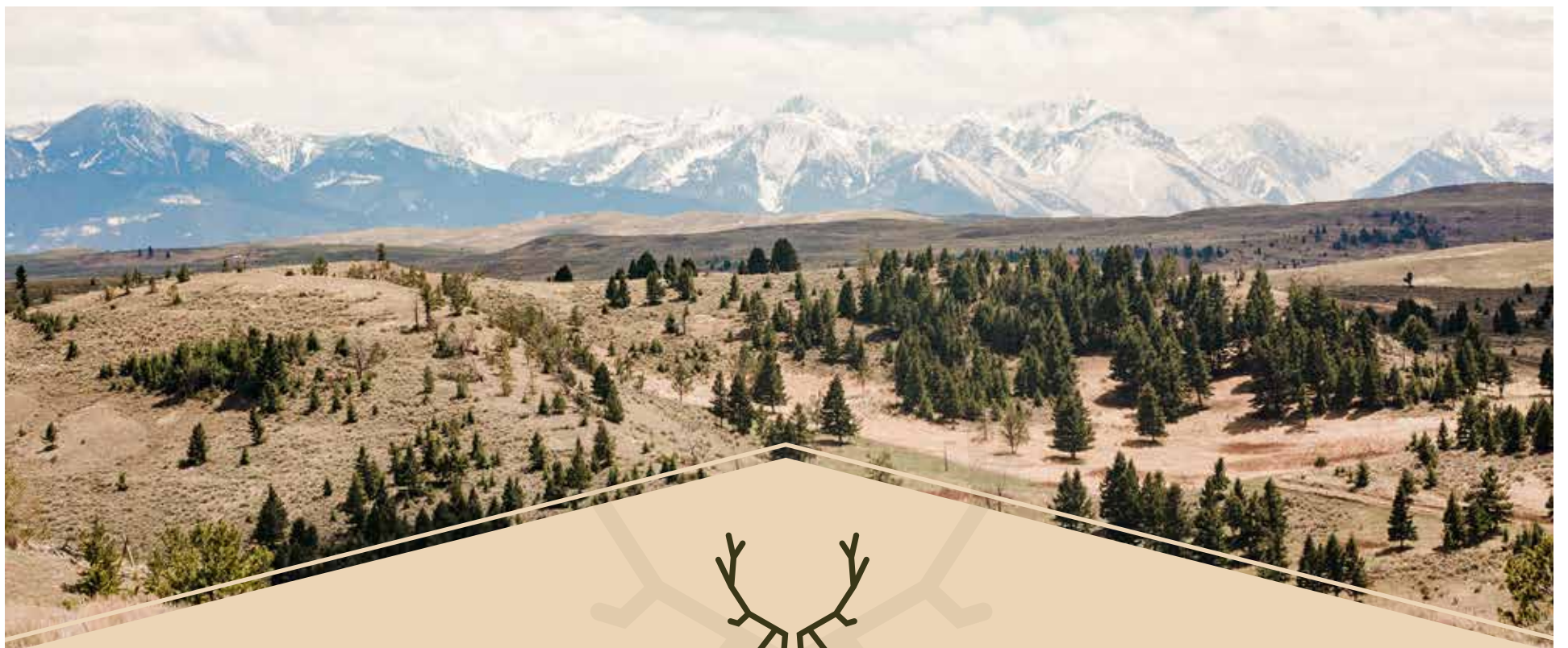
money for local schools. All proceeds will be split between the raffle winner, and Big Sky's Discovery Academy and Morningstar Learning Center.

Each of the schools will also be holding a silent auction offering experiential packages such as a spa night to raise funds during the evening's event.

The initial bingo games will start with the pre-purchase of a pack of 10 bingo cards, followed by a blackout game and a winner's circle where the evening's champion will receive a trophy to be passed down in years to come.

Following the crowning of the bingo champion, Dammit Lauren! will play a free concert, also in the Basecamp tent. The band, a local favorite, is based in Big Sky and specializes in alternative and psych rock music.

Although the music is free, tickets must be purchased for the bingo night, and can be found online at outlaw.myeventscenter.com.



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HIKE BIG SKY

WEDNESDAY HIKING SERIES

JULY 7 – AUGUST 18 | 9 AM

MEET AT TRAILHEAD FOR HIKES LISTED BELOW

JULY 7

UPLANDS | 2 MILES

with Big Sky Community Org

Steadily climb this town favorite trail to an area of higher elevation for expansive views of Big Sky.

JULY 14

HUMMOCKS | 3 MILES

with Gallatin River Task Force

Learn how the rolling topographic “hummocks” features around a hidden pond impact local watersheds with the GRTF.

JULY 21

BEEHIVE BASIN | 6.6 MILES

with Montana Adventure Team

Learn about the 7 Leave No Trace Principles while surrounded by peaks leading to an alpine lake. Pack a lunch, and plan to spend about 4 hours on the trail.

JULY 28

OUSEL FALLS | 1.6 MILES

with Big Sky Community Org

Bring your smart phone or camera for a trip to the falls and back offering several memorable photo opportunities along the way.

AUGUST 4

CRAIL TRAIL | 2.6 MILES

with Historic Crail Ranch

Learn about Big Sky’s history with an interpretive guide on this mellow hike through the Crail Ranch meadow.

AUGUST 11

SOUTH FORK | 1 MILE

with Gallatin River Task Force

Short but sweet, this trail runs along the South Fork of the Gallatin River. Stop by the river to learn more about the watershed ecosystem with the GRTF.

AUGUST 18

TOWN TO TRAILS | 6 MILES

Race Prep

Scout the race route through Uplands and Hummocks with a running guide in preparation for BSCO’s annual Town to Trail’s race this fall. **Meet at Town Center stage.**

FOR PROGRAM
DETAILS &
REGISTRATION
VISIT:
BSCOMT.ORG

NEW!
FAMILY HIKING
SERIES

TINY TREKS

with The Big Sky Community Organization & Morningstar Learning Center

BSCO staff is excited to introduce family friendly hikes for children ages 0-5 years and parents looking to connect with other families in the community. All trails are accessible by stroller, however we recommend baby wraps and/or backpack carriers for ease. Families are encouraged to travel at their own pace and to stop and explore along the way.

SATURDAY, JULY 10
10AM | CRAIL TRAIL

Meet at the Historic Crail Ranch.

FRIDAY, JULY 23
10AM | LITTLE WILLOW WAY

Meet at the Big Sky Community Park Playground.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 7
10AM | OUSEL FALLS

Meet at the Trailhead.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 20
10AM | SOUTH FORK LOOP

Meet at the Trailhead.

SEE TRAIL DESCRIPTIONS LISTED ABOVE

DO YOUR PART TO RECREATE RESPONSIBLY

We’re committed to keeping Montana outdoors, communities, residents, and visitors safe. As you enjoy all we have to offer, please join us in practicing these guidelines: **KNOW BEFORE YOU GO** • **PRACTICE PHYSICAL DISTANCING** • **PLAN AHEAD** • **PLAY IT SAFE** • **EXPLORE LOCALLY** • **LEAVE NO TRACE** • **BUILD AN INCLUSIVE OUTDOORS**

FOR MORE INFORMATION | VISIT: [BSCOMT.ORG](https://www.bscomt.org) | CALL: 406.993.2112

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LONE MOUNTAIN
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JOIN US FOR BIG SKY'S BIGGEST WEEK!

SUMMER 2021 LINEUP - BIGSKYPBR.COM

**All events located at the PBR Basecamp Tent in Town Center Plaza unless otherwise noted*

WEDNESDAY JULY 14 - SUNDAY, JULY 18

11am-6pm - 6th Annual Big Sky Art Auction

FRIDAY, JULY 16

6pm - Big Sky Community Rodeo at the Big Sky Events Arena

9pm - Community Street Dance featuring Dirtwire - Town Center Avenue

TUESDAY, JULY 20

10am-4pm - Western Sports Foundation/Big Sky Bravery - Black Bull Golf Tournament

6pm - Big Sky Bingo Night

9pm - Live Music featuring Dammit Lauren and The Well

WEDNESDAY, JULY 21

3pm - Mutton Bustin Pre-Ride Competition at the Big Sky Events Arena

5pm - Farmers Market

THURSDAY, JULY 22

12-6pm - Big Sky PBR Basecamp Vendor Village Open

2pm - PBR Meet & Greet

4pm - Live Music

7pm - 10th Annual Big Sky PBR Night 1 Bull Riding at the Big Sky Events Arena

8:30pm - Music in the Mountains Concert - featuring Magnolia Boulevard

FRIDAY, JULY 23

12-6pm - Big Sky PBR Basecamp Vendor Village Open

2pm - PBR Meet & Greet

4pm - Live Music

7pm - 10th Annual Big Sky PBR Night 2 Bull Riding at the Big Sky Events Arena

Live Music Following Bull Riding - Jason Boland & The Stragglers

SATURDAY, JULY 24

12-6pm - Big Sky PBR Basecamp Vendor Village Open

2pm - PBR Meet & Greet

4pm - Live Music

7pm - 10th Annual Big Sky PBR Championship Night 3 Bull Riding at the Big Sky Events Arena

Live Music Following Bull Riding - Robert Earl Keen

10 YEARS
2021
BIG SKY PBR
7X EVENT OF
THE YEAR

Big Sky's Biggest Week is proudly supporting: Big Sky Community Organization, Women in Action, Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter, Gallatin Invasive Species Alliance, Gallatin River Task Force, Haven, Big Sky Food Bank, Big Sky Bravery, Warriors & Quiet Waters, MorningStar Learning Center, The Big Sky Discovery Academy, Western Sports Foundation, Big Sky Youth Empowerment, Montana Land Reliance, Red White and Blue Warriors & Quiet Waters, Sustainability Network Organization, and The Montana Invasive Species Alliance

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



OUTLAW
EVENTS