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# Big Sky

August 13 - 26, 2021  
Volume 12 // Issue #17

Flatiron resort project  
seeks approval

Balancing the short-term  
rental market

Big Sky gains behavioral  
health officer

Mother-daughter artist team

SLAM Festivals provides  
community art



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# OUTLAW PARTNERS

August 13 - 26, 2021

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## PUBLISHER

Eric Ladd | eric@theoutlawpartners.com

## EDITORIAL

### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, VP MEDIA

Joseph T. O'Connor | joe@theoutlawpartners.com

### SENIOR EDITOR

Bella Butler | bella@theoutlawpartners.com

### NEW MEDIA LEAD

Mira Brody | mira@theoutlawpartners.com

### STAFF WRITER

Gabrielle Gasser | gabrielle@theoutlawpartners.com

### EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Julia Barton | editorial@theoutlawpartners.com

## CREATIVE

### LEAD DESIGNER

Marisa Opheim | marisa@theoutlawpartners.com

### GRAPHIC DESIGNER

ME Brown | maryelizabeth@theoutlawpartners.com

## SALES AND OPERATIONS

### CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Megan Paulson | megan@theoutlawpartners.com

### CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Treston Wold | treston@theoutlawpartners.com

### VP, SALES AND MARKETING

EJ Daws | ej@theoutlawpartners.com

### VP OF EVENTS

Ennion Williams | ennion@theoutlawpartners.com

### VP OF MARKETING

Blythe Beaubien | blythe@theoutlawpartners.com

### MEDIA AND EVENTS DIRECTOR

Ersin Ozer | ersin@theoutlawpartners.com

### MARKETING COORDINATOR

Sophia Breyfogle | sophia@theoutlawpartners.com

### VIDEO DIRECTOR, CINEMATOGRAPHER

Seth Dahl | seth@theoutlawpartners.com

### BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT LEAD

Sam Brooks | sam@theoutlawpartners.com

### EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR

Tucker Harris | tucker@theoutlawpartners.com

### SENIOR ACCOUNTANT

Sara Sipe | sara@theoutlawpartners.com

### PROJECT MANAGER

Eli Kretzmann | eli@theoutlawpartners.com

### COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

Meg Koenig | mk@theoutlawpartners.com

### EVENTS COORDINATOR, RETAIL MANAGER

Connor Clemens | connor@theoutlawpartners.com

### DISTRIBUTION MANAGER, LOCAL SALES

Patrick Mahoney | patrick@theoutlawpartners.com

### COPYWRITER

Patrick Straub

## CONTRIBUTORS

Katie Alvin, Katie Coleman, Patrick Conroy, Seth Langbauer, Tim Lydon, Al Malinowski, Sara Marino, Scott Mechura, Jennifer Mohler, Matt Morris, Cort Muller, Anthony Pavkovich, Jim Peaco, Dave Pecunies, Todd Wilkinson

## ON THE COVER:

Although the summer season at Big Sky Resort will soon come to an end, the stoke experienced on their mountain biking trails is not. PHOTO BY CORT MULLER VIA BIG SKY RESORT

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## 10 Flatiron resort project seeks approval

Representatives from a new massive, proposed Big Sky development presented an application for a resort community to the Big Sky Zoning Advisory Committee. The development would cover a 535-acre swath of land to the north and east of Andesite Mountain and introduce a hotel, residential properties, commercial spaces and other amenities.

## 8 Balancing the short-term rental market

For homeowners, renting properties on the short-term market has become a lucrative way to afford living in Big Sky. While the vacation rental market provides an important role in Big Sky's economy it also contributes to the housing crisis.

## 17 Big Sky gains behavioral health officer

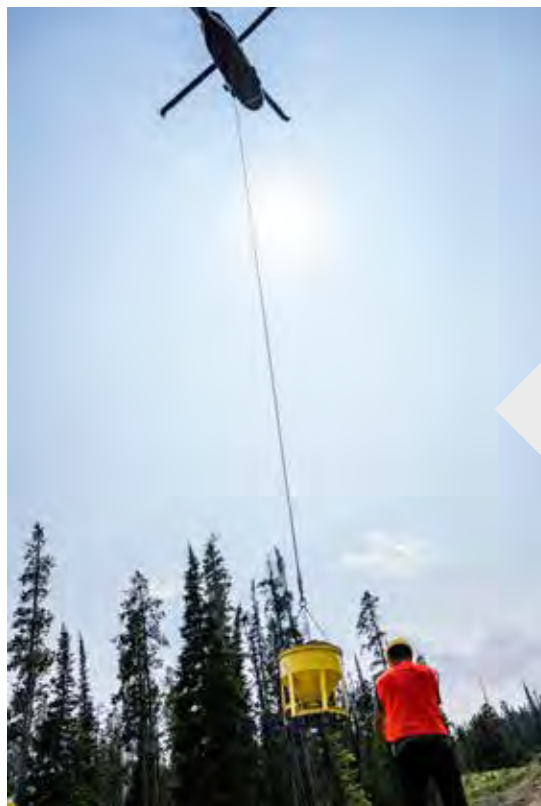
Behavioral health issues are on the rise in Big Sky, a phenomenon the community's new behavioral health officer, Shannon Steele, is looking to address head-on. The Yellowstone Club Community Foundation presents Steele's position as a part of the Big Sky Behavioral Health Coalition.

## 36 Mother-daughter artist team

Terry Hall and daughter Whitney Hall are Bozeman's mother-daughter painter duo. The two took art classes together at Palomar College in San Marcos, California and have evolved their styles to be truly unique, with inspiration pulled from Western and California Impressionism.

## 33 SLAM Festivals provides community art

Over the weekend, art lovers from across the Gallatin Valley strolled between each of the three SLAM Festivals locations in Bozeman's Historic District. While in the past they have taken place solely at Bogert Park, this year the 46 artist booths were spread out among three locations to bring a variety of crafts to the Bozeman community.



## Opening Shot

Big things are happening along the lines of the new Swift Current 6 chairlift. Concrete for the new towers was flown in via helicopter last week, each load weighing about 5,000 pounds. About 140 trips were made to carry over 550,000 pounds of concrete over two days. PHOTO BY PATRICK CONROY VIA BIG SKY RESORT

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### EDITORIAL POLICY

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Letters to the editor allow EBS readers to express views and share how they would like to effect change. These are not Thank You notes. Letters should be 250 words or less, respectful, ethical, accurate, and proofread for grammar and content. We reserve the right to edit letters and will not publish individual grievances about specific businesses or letters that are abusive, malicious or potentially libelous. Include: full name, address, phone number and title. Submit to media@outlaw.partners.

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528 KARST STAGE LOOP

# THE BIG SKY REAL ESTATE CO.

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*Also, offered as part of the package is a 1.02 acre ski in/ski out lot at Spanish Peaks Mountain Club which provides either a golf or ski social membership. Enjoy a world class Signature Weiskopf 18 hole golf course, tennis & pickle ball courts, miles of hiking and mountain biking trails that double as groomed Nordic/snow shoe trails in the winter, 2 1/2 miles of a tributary of the Gallatin River and a clubhouse with fine dining, a lively bar, men's and women's locker rooms, workout facility, private pool, hot tubs & ski access. Enjoy benefits at the Montage hotel as well.*

**528 Karst Stage Loop**

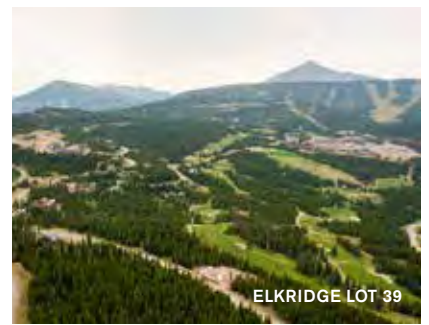
MLS # 360585 | HOME & LAND | 10 +/- ACRES

**528 Karst Stage Loop**

MLS # 360584 | LAND | 10 +/- ACRES

**Elkridge Lot 39**

MLS # 360583 LAND | 1.02 +/- ACRES



ELKRIDGE LOT 39



**Martha Johnson**  
VP of Sales  
Founding Broker  
martha@bigsky.com  
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## SLAM Festivals took place in Bozeman last weekend featuring a number of local artists. What is one way you support local artists in your community?



**Martha Johnson** | Atlanta, Georgia

"We've done parties at home with someone who represents a bunch of artists. You just provide food and invite friends and everyone gets to look at and buy whatever art they like."



**Karen Jennings** | Bismarck, North Dakota

"We have a local print artist we support. We all had one [of his prints] in our homes, so we supported him by buying them."



**Marian Rohrer** | Pasadena, California

"Our community has art fairs so we like to go to the fairs and if we see something we like, we buy it."



**Jackie Pool** | Henderson, Texas

"We don't have a lot of artists in our community... but when I am in Montana, I try to buy things that were made here by different artists."

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

### BSSD ballot measure in upcoming election

To the Editor:

The Big Sky School District #72 is conducting a site election this summer. A site election is an election asking the voters for permission to acquire a property that is not contiguous to current district property, simply a yes or no. We have been seeking a transportation storage facility for some time and, with a positive vote of our constituents, we would begin to more aggressively seek an off-campus location to store and maintain our bus fleet. Should we successfully find a site, the district will witness a decline in the costs associated with: warming our bus fleet every morning, maintenance as a result of busses being stored in the cold weather and a longer life from our busses. The timeline for the August election is as follows:

- Aug. 4, 2021 – Ballots mailed from Gallatin County election office
- Aug. 5 – Aug. 7 – Ballots arrive in Big Sky
- Aug. 24 – Ballots must be returned to the Gallatin County election office before 5 p.m.

Please visit <https://bssd72.org/election> for a short video explaining the election or feel free to contact Dustin Shipman at [dshipman@bssd72.org](mailto:dshipman@bssd72.org) with any questions. Thanks for your past and continued support.

Dr. Dustin Shipman  
Superintendent, BSSD  
Big Sky, MT

### BSRAD seeks community input

To the Editor:

I wanted to take a moment to express my gratitude for the opportunity to serve you as a board member of the Resort Area District (Resort Tax). Having grown up in our small town, I take a lot of pride and responsibility in serving you in my role. The District's priority is our community and the well-being of its members. The Resort Tax is the primary public funding source of Big Sky and therefore it is critical that you help to inform our ongoing decision-making.

As the new District Board Chair, I would like to challenge our community to learn about Big Sky's needs and priorities, "voice" your perspective through public comment, and stay engaged. The District hosts frequently occurring public meetings and makes important decisions on a regular basis – yet we only hear from many of you during our funding decisions in June.

Coming out of the pandemic, the engagement from our neighbors has declined. After allocating \$7,057,754 to 47 projects from 26 sponsoring organizations, I was surprised to see a 50 percent decrease in responses to our post allocation community survey. Of those that did respond, nearly 40 percent indicated they didn't attend or watch the allocation discussions, but still commented on the decisions made. As your elected officials we want to hear from you. I hope you can begin to engage more regularly and year-round, so you are informed on the context of the decisions, and we are informed on your community vision.

If you have questions, comments, or ideas to increase engagement, please feel free to email me at [sarah@resorttax.org](mailto:sarah@resorttax.org). Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you or seeing you at an upcoming District meeting.

Sarah Blechta  
Board Chair, Big Sky Resort Area District  
Big Sky, MT



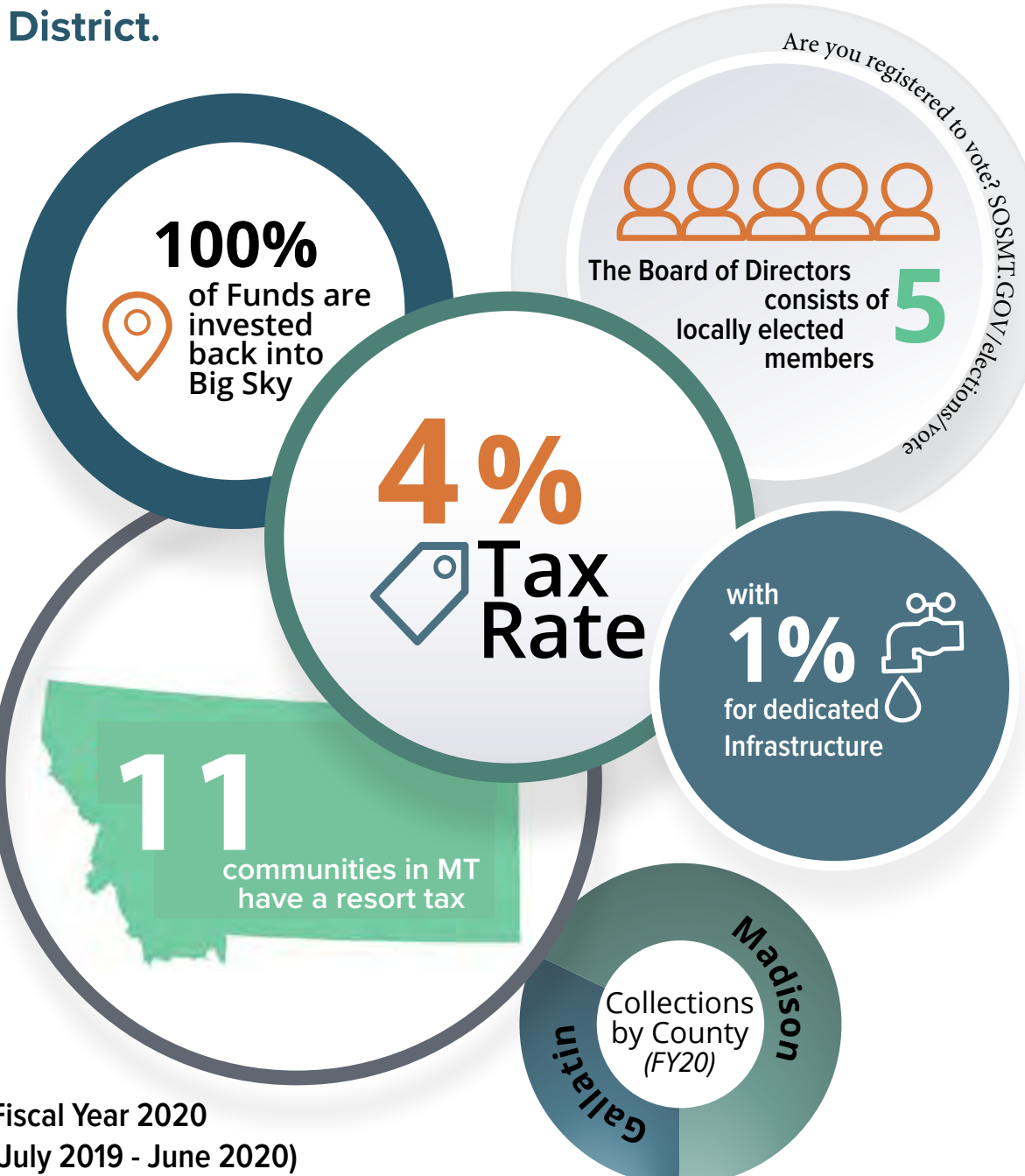
# BETTER TOGETHER

A biweekly District bulletin

## Resort Tax 101

Resort Tax became effective on June 1st, **1992**, to minimize and off-set the impacts of tourism on local community services and infrastructure. In **1998** the general electorate of Big Sky voted to create the locally governed **Big Sky Resort Area District**.

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



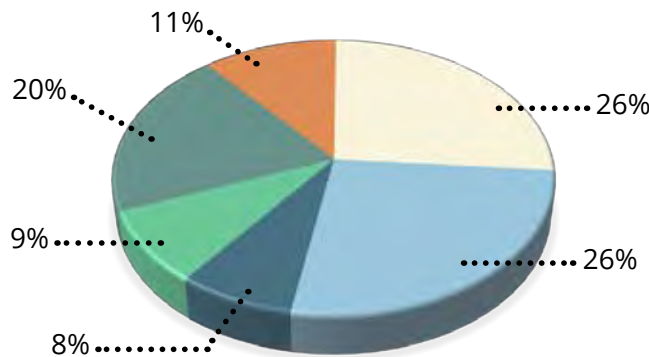
Fiscal Year 2020  
(July 2019 - June 2020)

**FY20 Committed Funds = \$10,256,075\***

\*Committed funds do not reflect actual expenses incurred in FY20.

**27 Sponsoring Organizations**

**73 Projects Awarded Funding**



**Q:** What is Resort Tax?

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

**Q:** Who pays the Resort Tax?

**A:** Those purchasing luxury goods & services sold in the District. Local businesses collect & remit (not pay), retaining 5% for administrative processing.

**Q:** What allows for Resort Tax?

**A:** Montana Statute (MCA 7-6-15)

**Q:** How do I get involved?

**A:** Attend a Board Meeting; Submit Public Comment; Schedule an Orientation; Sign-up for District Newsletters; Run for the Board of Directors; and **VOTE!**

Share public comment by emailing [Info@ResortTax.org](mailto:Info@ResortTax.org) or by attending District meetings. Visit [ResortTax.org](http://ResortTax.org) for more information.



September 8<sup>th</sup>  
@ 9:00 am

\*District Meetings are held at the Resort Tax office (11 Lone Peak Dr. #204) and through Zoom

October 13<sup>th</sup>  
@ 9:00 am





## Grammy Winners featured at Bravo! Big Sky concert series

ARTS COUNCIL OF BIG SKY

**BIG SKY** – The Arts Council of Big Sky is pleased to present the 10th annual Bravo! Big Sky Music Festival in the Big Sky Town Center on Aug. 13-14. The festival, formerly called the Big Sky Classical Music Festival, brings some of the best classical and crossover musicians to Big Sky for two nights of world-class performances.

The festival kicks off with a ticketed concert at the Warren Miller Performing Arts Center on Friday, Aug. 13, with an intimate concert from Angella Ahn and Friends.

“This is a world-class group of musicians that were assembled just for this concert,” said Brian Hurlbut, ACBS executive director. “They will be playing an intimate concert at the WMPAC and then joining the orchestra on Saturday. We’re thrilled to have them.”

On Saturday there will be a free concert in Len Hill Park in the Big Sky Town Center. First up will be a performance from the Big Sky Festival String Orchestra, playing pieces from Mozart, LeClair, Kilar, Walker and Grieg, with guest soloist Angella Ahn. Closing the Saturday performance will be FUTUREMAN/SILVERMAN, a wide-ranging musical conversation between two of the world’s most eclectic and adventurous musicians. Roy “Futureman” Wooten is a five-time Grammy-winning percussionist, founding member of Bela Fleck and the Flecktones, a composer, inventor, innovator, and a wildly engaging personality.

“This is the tenth anniversary of the festival,” said Hurlbut, “and we think we have a great lineup that will appeal to everyone.”

*For more information about the festival please visit [bigskyarts.org](http://bigskyarts.org).*

## Collaborative effort will scour Gallatin River

GALLATIN RIVER TASK FORCE

**BOZEMAN** – The Gallatin Watershed Council and Gallatin River Task Force have teamed up to host the third annual collaborative Gallatin River Cleanup. During the weekend of Aug. 26, teams of volunteers will pick up trash all the way from the headwaters to the valley.

The Big Sky-based Gallatin River Task Force and the Bozeman-based Gallatin Watershed Council will join forces to tackle the length of the Gallatin and its tributaries with a goal of engaging 200 community members. Both organizations are committed to keeping the Gallatin River Watershed clean so we can protect and restore it for current and future generations.

“Participating in a river cleanup is one way that citizens can do their part for the river we all love,” said Holly Hill, coordinator for the Gallatin Watershed Council. “We’re excited to partner with the Task Force to amplify all of our efforts in stewarding the Gallatin River.”

Community members will be forming small teams and dispersing to river and stream access points across the watershed. To sign up for a team in the Big Sky Area, contact Isabella at [isabella@gallatinrivertaskforce.org](mailto:isabella@gallatinrivertaskforce.org). To sign up for a team in the Bozeman Area, visit this link or contact Brooke at [outreach@gallatinwatershedcouncil.org](mailto:outreach@gallatinwatershedcouncil.org).

The Gallatin Watershed Council is a nonprofit group headquartered in Bozeman, MT. Their mission is to guide collaborative watershed stewardship in the Gallatin Valley for a healthy and productive landscape.

The 2021 Lower Gallatin River Cleanup is supported by Republic Services, American Rivers, REI Co-op, First Security Bank, Northwestern Energy and Montana Angler. The 2021 Upper Gallatin River Cleanup is supported by the Big Sky Area Resort Tax District, Republic Services, Roxy’s Market, Ace Hardware, Orvis and American Rivers.

## Gallatin County courts facility reaches voters this fall

GALLATIN MEDIA CENTER

**BOZEMAN** – This fall, Gallatin County voters will decide on a bond to build a safer, more efficient courts facility that will serve all Gallatin County citizens. The Gallatin County Commission unanimously voted today to put a \$29 million bond on the general election ballot this November.

The bond will be used to replace the current Law and Justice Center, located in Bozeman, with a new single-story, 57,000-square-foot building. When a replacement building was proposed in 2019, the price was \$60 million. By using value engineering, strategic design and a smaller footprint, the new construction plan will reduce the cost to \$38 million. Gallatin County has been saving for this project and will cover about 25 percent of the construction at no additional cost to the taxpayers. And the county was able to purchase a new facility for Gallatin County Sheriff’s Office operations, making this proposal even smaller. In effect, the total bond—that is, the cost to the taxpayers—has been reduced to \$29 million.

The current Law and Justice Center was built in 1961 as a Catholic high school and later retrofitted into a law enforcement and courts facility. The structural integrity of the building is compromised and it lacks a fire suppression system. This endangers thousands of citizens who utilize the building every month – from those serving our community working there daily, to those serving their civic jury duty, getting married, being granted adoptions, seeking orders of protection, and those settling life-altering disputes.

There is also a lack of space in the current building, causing long wait times. There are not enough courtrooms – which the county is constitutionally mandated to provide to our state-allocated judges – or administrative space to handle current caseloads. The 2021 Montana Legislature approved funding for a fourth District Court judge, who is slated to arrive as soon as January 2022, and the county must provide space for that judge and their staff.

Ballots for the 2021 general election will be mailed on Oct. 13. They will be due back no later than 8 PM on Election Day—Tuesday, Nov. 2, 2021.

## Littman resigns from school board Board seeks candidate for vacant seat

EBS STAFF

**BIG SKY** – Big Sky School District board trustee Whitney Littman tendered her resignation at a July 30 school board meeting. Littman has served on the board for two three-year terms and will now be moving to Bozeman. In a heartwarming address, Board Chair Loren Bough thanked Littman for her service and wished her well.

An emotional Littman thanked her fellow board members for the kind words. She explained that the move is necessary and expressed that she has been honored to serve on the board.

“The responsibilities of managing the district are vast, and I have the ultimate respect for the board members, the administration, the teachers and the students that make the district what they are every day,” Littman wrote in an email to EBS.

The board will now be accepting letters of interest for those who wish to run for the position. These letters are due to Corky Miller at [cmiller@bssd72.org](mailto:cmiller@bssd72.org) by 9 a.m. on Aug. 10.

“With an opening on the board, I hope a candidate will come forward that is willing to dedicate their time and energy to fulfilling the district’s mission of quality education for all students at the highest level that serves each student’s needs,” Littman wrote.

The next school board meeting will be on Aug. 12, where the board will consider the adoption of a new budget.



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## Short-term rentals: Part II

### Big Sky businesses, groups seek ‘balance’ in short-term rental market

BY BELLA BUTLER

*Editor's Note: This is the second installment in a two-part series on housing and the short-term rental market in Big Sky. Visit [explorebigsky.com](http://explorebigsky.com) to read the first installment.*

**BIG SKY** – Before 9 a.m. one weekday morning, MJ Matute drums her fingers against a paper coffee cup in the Huntley Lodge lobby at Big Sky Resort. She’s taking a quick break from her job as the Director of Talent and Culture for Food and Beverage at Big Sky Resort. Matute arrived at the resort in 2005 from Peru on a J-1 visa, a nonimmigrant visa that promotes cultural exchange. Sixteen years later, she’s not only a Big Sky resident but also a Big Sky homeowner.

In 2016, Matute and her boyfriend, Michael Shepard, bought a Hill Condo studio and rented it to a local tenant until they sold it this year. In 2018, they bought a second Hill Condo, this time a loft they planned to eventually live in. They remodeled the condo themselves and put it on the long-term rental market.

In April of this year, Matute sent a text to the loft’s most recent tenants, Colin McNamara, his girlfriend and their roommate letting them know she was losing money renting the condo to them for \$1,900 a month, and that she would not be renewing the lease. Instead, the condo was going on the short-term market.

“At the beginning, [\$1,900] was just covering the bills,” Matute said of the loft. As property taxes and homeowners association fees increased and the Hill Condos undertook a siding project that cost owners \$18,726, Matute says she was paying for the loft out of her pocket.

According to Matute, she chose to list the loft on AirBnB, a popular short-term rental website, to keep the property in good shape and to stay out of “the hole.”

“I’m done working three to four jobs,” she said. “I did it for 15 years.”

For homeowners like Matute, renting on the short-term market has become a way to afford living in Big Sky, and for visitors, this avenue helps supplement lodging supply with a rapidly growing demand. That reality, however, doesn’t make a difference for tenants like McNamara, who came within inches of having to leave Big Sky when he struggled to find new housing.

The Big Sky Community Housing Trust, which recently launched a program on Aug. 1 offering financial incentives for homeowners who

agree to long-term leases, acknowledges that while the short-term rental market contributes to the housing crisis, it also plays an important role in the community.

“We’re a vacation destination,” said Laura Seyfang, executive director of the housing trust. “So short-term rentals, we need them here ... but to have no available housing for local workers is a huge concern. So there needs to be some balance.”

“**Between July 2020 and May 2021, nearly 24 percent—or about \$2.1 million—of resort tax collected came from short-term rentals.**”

In addition to providing income for homeowners along with opportunity for the several property management companies in town, the short-term market contributes significant revenue to both the Big Sky community and the state of Montana.

Between July 2020 and May 2021, nearly 24 percent—or about \$2.1 million—of resort tax collected came from short-term rentals. Of the roughly \$7 million allocated to community projects in June, \$705,000 was distributed to projects related to local and workforce housing. The board denied a \$1.1-million request from the Housing Trust to fund a land acquisition for future workforce housing, but a joint subcommittee is currently considering how to support the project.

In Montana, short-term rentals—those less than 30 days in length—are required to charge a 4 percent lodging facilities use tax plus a 4 percent sales and use tax. While the state doesn’t break down total lodging tax income by type of accommodation, Big Sky is the top contributor of lodging tax in the entire state. Short-term rentals are a part of that.

In 2020, Big Sky raked in more than \$350,000 in lodging facilities use tax for the state, or roughly 17 percent of total collections from Montana cities. Conversely, Big Sky makes up 2.8 percent of the state’s population.

And yet, the Housing Trust currently manages a waitlist of more than 100 individuals seeking housing in a town that has zero vacancy among long-term rentals and an estimated 1,200 units on the short-term market.

While other mountain towns in the West like Telluride, Steamboat Springs and Crested Butte are considering regulatory measures like short-term rental caps and additional fees, Big Sky lacks the municipal leadership to impose the same restrictions via the same avenues.

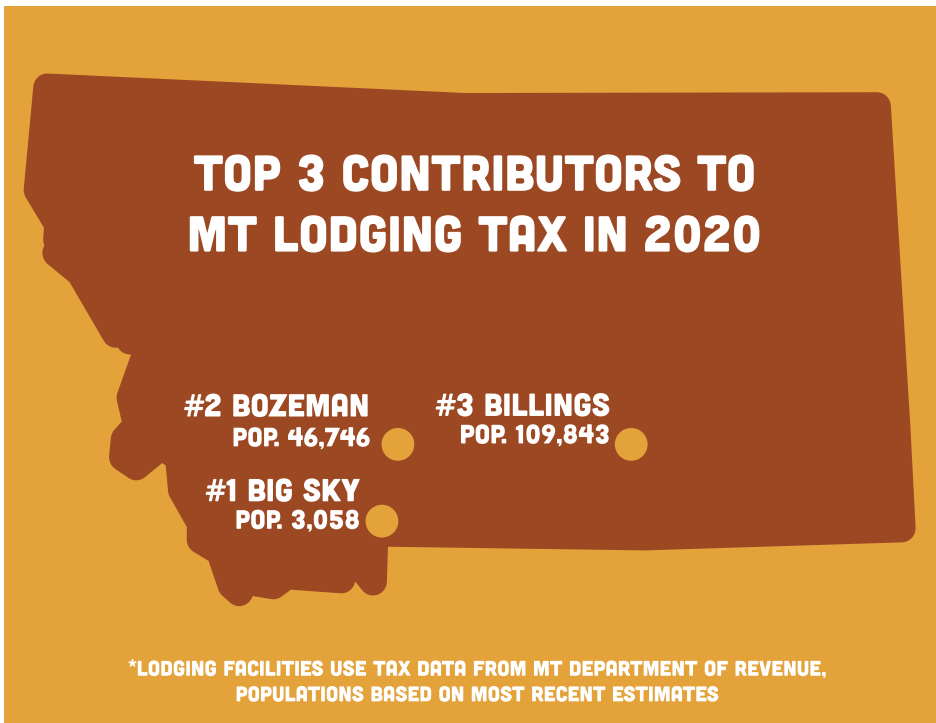
Steve Johnson sits on the Big Sky Planning and Zoning Advisory Committee, the entity that advises the Gallatin County Planning and Zoning Commission. Johnson says it’s “highly unlikely” that the committee would take action on short-term rental regulation and that the ball would be in the court of Big Sky’s numerous HOAs.

Montana legislation passed in 2019 virtually ties the hands of HOAs on the matter. Senate Bill 300 prevents HOAs from “imposing more onerous restrictions on a property owner’s basic rights than when the property owner acquired the property.” According to the bill, one of those “basic rights” is the right to rent the property—for any amount of time.

“You have to try to look for those creative things that exist because we don’t have a city government,” Seyfang said. “We can’t do what a lot of the other towns have done.” The housing trust’s most recent “creative thing” is its rent local incentive, which pays homeowners up to \$14,500 per lease to rent long-term.







information on the rent local program to pass along to prospective clients who own units in neighborhoods she considers to be better suited for local housing—mostly those already largely inhabited by locals.

“I am willing to lose that business in order to help the community and help the housing trust,” Doty said.

Doty doesn’t purport to know definitively whether or not this is the way forward. She empathizes with property managers whose priority is to look out for the client and says the short-term market isn’t fully to blame.

But just like the Housing Trust’s incentive program seeks to do until its remaining \$53,600 budget dries up and they return to the community with hopeful requests for more, Doty also finds it important to strike equilibrium in the community. This, she says, will best serve both the tourists that are the economic lifeblood of the resort town as well as the community members that take care of them.

“In order for us to continue moving forward with the growth that we’re seeing in Big Sky,” she said, “we have to create the balance in the housing situation.”

Amanda Doty, who has worked in property management in Big Sky since she moved to town in 2015, opened her own property management company this past spring and subscribes to Seyfang’s credo on balance.

“I believe there are neighborhoods in Big Sky that are better suited for local housing,” Doty said in a Aug. 10 interview with EBS. “And if we’re going to survive as a community and be successful, we need to make it a point to find housing for the people that are running this town.”

Doty manages 10 short-term rental properties at her business, Wilson Peak Properties. In June, she reached out to the Housing Trust for

“ I believe there are neighborhoods in Big Sky that are better suited for local housing. And if we’re going to survive as a community and be successful, we need to make it a point to find housing for the people that are running this town. ”  
-Amanda Doty

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# Flatiron resort project seeks zoning approval

## Zoning advisory committee considers impacts of next big development

BY MIRA BRODY

**BIG SKY** – Representatives from a new massive, proposed Big Sky development presented an application for a resort community to the Big Sky Zoning Advisory Committee at an Aug. 2 meeting. After six hours of presentations and deliberation, the committee said it lacked information to recommend approval or denial to Gallatin County.

Middle Fork Properties LLC, a Bozeman-based company acting as the landowner and development team for the proposed development known as Flatiron Montana, filed an application for a Planned Unit Development with Gallatin County on May 28. The Big Sky committee, which advises the county's Planning and Zoning Commission, had five days to review what committee members describe as an "8-inch thick" binder of application materials.

The development would cover a 535-acre swath of land to the north and east of Andesite Mountain at the base of the Thunderwolf and Lone Moose chairlifts at Big Sky Resort, an area that spans parts of both Gallatin and Madison counties.

Plans for the project and its 1,440 units are subdivided into 14 separate building envelopes, a typical approach for a project of this size and desired flexibility, according to Mayana Rice, assistant planning director for Gallatin County Planning and Community Development. Flatiron's proposal includes a hotel, residential properties, commercial spaces, a summer and winter trail system, lift access and workforce housing for up to 900 people. Flatiron is estimated to take 20 years to complete.

Michael Schreiner, a principle and managing partner of Flatiron and owner of Middle Fork Properties, says the Flatiron development will help alleviate pressure on growing visitation to the resort.

"I think the base area of Big Sky, if you've spent any time up there, it's bursting at the seams and to help take the load off the area this seems, for us, to be the perfect location to add dining and services to the Big Sky ski area," Schreiner said in an Aug. 3 interview with EBS.

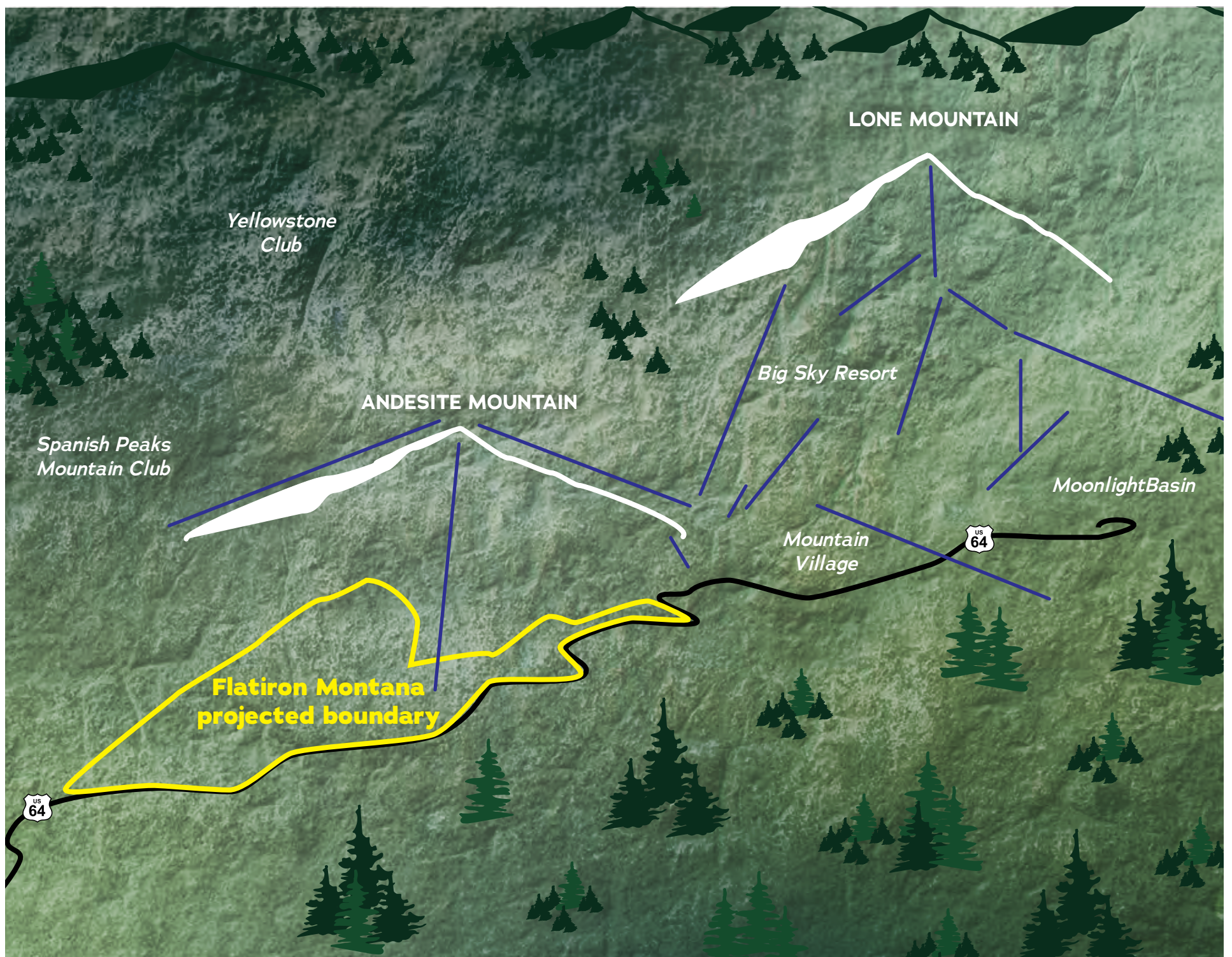
Schreiner and his partners purchased the land in 2019, and the Flatiron project is being designed and developed by Ecosign Mountain Resort Planners Ltd., a company based in Whistler, British Columbia, that has helped develop over 500 resorts in the last 40 years.

Schreiner says community is key to the project, as is pedestrian access; the layout is specifically designed, he says, so that minimal car use is necessary once you arrive.

The Flatiron land parcel is currently zoned for resort and open space preservation, and requires a Conditional Use Application in order to approve the Planned Unit Development. A PUD establishes project density, building envelopes (or subdivisions), general circulation plan, building and parking standards, but is not subject to standard zoning requirements, allowing the developer flexibility as they build.

In addition to the PUD application, Middle Fork Properties, LLC also applied for four variances that would allow changes to the design of street access, pedestrian walkways and the slopes on which construction will occur.

At the end of the meeting, the five-member committee unanimously agreed that with little time to review a project of Flatiron's magnitude, they would recommend a continuance for Gallatin County allowing themselves, the zoning committee, as well as the public 30 days to submit questions to the applicant before recommending either approval or denial of the application. Additional public comments will also be accepted during this time.



"I believe the scale of this project ... [is] a major impact on this community at large, not just the neighboring property owners," said committee member Philip Kedrowski during an Aug. 3 phone interview with EBS. "A lot of people would care to have some input or at least know what's going on ... because it's going to dramatically affect us all."

Two members of the public as well as committee members asked questions during the meeting about the proposed development's impacts on traffic and wildlife along with water quality and quantity.

The Middle Fork of the West Fork of the Gallatin River cuts through the lot, and Middle Fork Properties consultant Chris Leonard called the tributary "the crown jewel of Flatiron" during his presentation.

The Middle Fork is a crucial component to the community's water source and according to the Department of Environmental Quality, is currently listed on the state of Montana's list of impaired waterways due to excess nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment. Members of the committee and the public raised questions about how the Flatiron development could further impair the Middle Fork.

"Anytime you introduce human impacts to a natural environment, there are going to be impacts to water, wildlife and other natural resources," Emily O'Connor, Gallatin River Task Force's conservation director, told EBS on Aug. 3. "There are ways to minimize impacts, but those measures need to be carefully designed and implemented to work effectively at the right scale for the size of the development."

GRTF joined a handful of local organizations that submitted public comment in the form of a letter, voicing concerns over how a major development like flatiron might impact Big Sky's water system. Specific concerns included the river's current load of sediment, nutrients and pathogens as well as E. coli, all factors influenced by resort development, recreation, landscape maintenance, wastewater and septic systems, according to the letter.

Middle Fork Properties has been receptive to GRTF's existing Middle Fork restoration project, which is located directly within the proposed development, according to O'Connor.

The development's connection to the Big Sky County Water and Sewer District would be critical, O'Connor added, as advanced centralized treatment systems are

often best suited for developments of this size. Middle Fork Properties will present their development at the next BSWSD board meeting on Aug. 17.

Public commenters expressed understanding of the project's benefits but expressed concerns.

"I am not against development as long as the work is applied responsibly, justly and with transparency," said Joanna McCoy, whose property borders the development area. McCoy has been a part-time Big Sky resident for 30 years, a full-time resident for two, and is the vice president of the Antler Ridge Homeowner's Association.

"I can understand the economic impact that this large project can have on the community," McCoy said. "At the same time, I understand the other enormous impacts that are getting ready to unfold."

McCoy also expressed frustration about what she called a "lack of communication." Although Leonard approached the HOA in February with preliminary plans, she said, there was no communication between then and July 22 when they were made aware of the Aug. 2 meeting.

The official hearing for the Flatiron development project will take place on Aug. 26 at 1 p.m. when the Gallatin County Planning and Zoning Commission can accept the committee's recommendation of a continuance or can approve or deny the project. The hearing will take place at the Gallatin County Courthouse and will also be available virtually.

The commission will make the final decision on the PUD. If the PUD is approved, the commission will also approve or deny the four variances.

"What's at stake is significant enough that someone will find a way to get this thing moving forward," committee member Steve Johnson told EBS in a phone interview. "Too much is at stake here. Our concern as a local group is that it's done right."

Members of the public can submit comment before the Aug. 26 hearing by emailing [planning@gallatin.mt.gov](mailto:planning@gallatin.mt.gov).

*Bella Butler contributed reporting to this story.*



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# Local student attends American Legion Boys Nation

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

WASHINGTON D.C. – The last week of July found John Chadwell, a high school student from Big Sky, playing Montana senator in Washington D.C. as a delegate for American Legion Boys Nation. Chadwell attended Boys State, a hands-on educational experience teaching high schoolers about the U.S. government, in early June and was subsequently chosen as a senator to represent Montana at the national level.

After paying his tuition to go to Boys State, the American Legion Post 99 of Big Sky flew Chadwell out to Washington D.C. for the eight-day national program during the last week of July.

At Boys Nation, which started in 1946, 100 senators comprised of two students from every state, except Hawaii, and Washington D.C. engage in an experience-based approach to learn how the U.S. Senate and the federal government function. This year, some states didn't participate due to COVID-19 meaning other states sent more delegates to make up the difference. The delegates are divided into two political parties, Federalists and Nationalists, and each party conducts a party convention, sets a platform, and elects offices including a president and vice president.

Each of the 100 senators also writes, introduces and debates a bill before a Senate committee and if their bill passes through committee, it is voted on by the entire Senate. Bills that are passed by the Senate are later signed or vetoed by the delegate who was voted as the Boys Nation president.

Chadwell drafted a bill that would provide more mental health funding in schools. His bill passed the committee level with an amendment, sending the bill to the entire Senate where Chadwell defended his piece of legislation. His bill passed, becoming only one of 24 to do so, and was subsequently signed into law by the Boys Nation president.

"I'm grateful that my [bill] passed because I think it demonstrates that we as youth recognize the need for more mental health support in our schools and in our lives," Chadwell said.

In addition to engaging in the governmental process, delegates at Boys Nation had the chance to explore D.C. and see landmarks like the Lincoln Memorial, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Washington Monument as well as to meet the national commander of the American Legion, James W. "Bill" Oxford.

Usually, students are able to go to the U.S. Capitol and meet their state senators in person. However, this year the meetings took place virtually. Chadwell said that during his virtual meeting with U.S. Sens. Steve Daines and Jon Tester, Daines lamented the fact that the boys had come all the way from Montana and they still couldn't meet in person.

In short order, according to Chadwell, Daines made some calls and sent cars to pick up Chadwell and the other three boys from Montana. The four delegates from Montana were then treated to a private tour of the Capitol by Daines.

"He [gave] us a full tour of the Capitol, which was really truly spectacular," Chadwell said. "That was certainly a highlight."

Reflecting on the experience, Chadwell said his favorite parts were having his bill passed and getting to hear some of the legislation and concerns from other student senators representing everywhere from Alaska to Florida.

"Attending Boys Nation meeting kids from all across the country, you learn that if you really immerse yourself, involve yourself, get to know people, understand their perspective, and really let them speak and hear what they have to say, then you can relate with them and their perspective a lot more than you would have thought," Chadwell said.

He added that it was a pleasure to attend and he is very grateful to have had this opportunity.

"It was truly an honor to go and be able to involve myself in [Boys Nation,]" he said. "I'm really thankful to Montana Boys State, to American Legion Post 99 in Big Sky and I'm thankful to Mr. [Tony] Coppola and all those people for helping me out and getting me involved in Boys State."



Left to right, Cole Taylor, U.S. Senator Steve Daines, Dalton Sand, John Chadwell and Cole Basler walk together in front of the Capitol building as Daines takes the four Montana delegates on a private tour. PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN CHADWELL



# BIG SKY FARMERS MARKET

## Jill Zeidler Ceramic Art

BY MIRA BRODY

Jill Zeidler, owner of Jill Zeidler Ceramic Art, creates with her hands. Unlike a lot of ceramic artists, she does away with the wheel, and prefers to sculpt her both beautiful and functional pieces with her own strength; pieces which you can find on display at her gallery and studio in the Big Horn Shopping Center or at the Big Sky Farmers Market on Wednesday evenings.



The Waterbury, Connecticut-native went to Northern Arizona University for a degree in ceramics, then Montana State University for a national student exchange program. While in the area, she fell in love with the mountains—as well as her now-husband—and they agreed they would return one day. Now they’ve called Big Sky home for about 18 years, during which time Zeidler made her artistic mark on the community.

Before there was a high school in Big Sky, Zeidler taught at Ophir School alongside Sharon Holtzman in her Art Around the Corner program. She credits the local community for their support in her artistic endeavors and encourages area residents to shop local whenever they can.

“I don’t think that I would have the business that I have now if weren’t for the community, and second homeowners,” Zeidler said.

Her process is very decorative—Zeidler uses a handprint technique and Chinese tissue transfers alongside contemporary colors. The imagery she uses—constellations, birds and flowers—are derived from things that bring her joy. After a stint during COVID of taking a lot of custom orders, she’s eager to get creative again, drawing from the surrounding nature for inspiration.

## Sister’s Gluten Free Bakery

BY MIRA BRODY

If you have a gluten allergy or are a celiac, you probably understand the struggles of trying to find a good, consumable cinnamon roll. Karen Miller, owner of Sister’s Gluten Free Bakery, has taken it upon herself to solve the gluten free cinnamon roll—and other baked goods—problem once and for all. Spurred by her own gluten allergy and a strong partnership with Montana Gluten Free Processors, where her father works, Miller began baking when she lived in Boise, Idaho, and opened her storefront in Belgrade shortly after returning to Montana six years ago.



The Montana native has since been slinging delicious, nutritious and gluten-intolerant-friendly breads, cakes, brownies, cookies ... you name it. It’s no wonder there’s often a line in front of her booth at the Big Sky Farmers Market.

Sister’s uses Montana Gluten Free oat flour made locally in Belgrade from a certified gluten free oat developed by students at the Montana State University plant lab. Because recipes take a lot of tweaking and reworking, and the nature of baking gluten-free is such a detailed science, Miller’s product cannot be duplicated on a larger scale.

“Everything I do is an artisan style because you’re not going to be able to mass produce this style of bread,” Miller said. “You have to make it, form it, let it rise, and form it again.”

Her goods are also free of preservatives and baked with farm-fresh eggs. Because the oat flour is minimally processed, her products are more nutritious due to higher levels of protein, fiber and added oat groat, a fiber-rich cereal grain. In addition to make tastier gluten free options, Miller hopes to also make them affordable and enjoyable for all, allergies be damned. She says one of her regular customers once told her, “It used to be his bread, and now it’s our bead,” proof that no matter if you’re gluten free or not, Sister’s is enjoyed by all.



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# OUTLAW | News from our publisher, Outlaw Partners

## Big Sky Rodeo, Big Sky PBR lead community zero-waste efforts

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distribution of zero-waste products, Outlaw was able to divert 60 percent of waste to recycling and compost with support from 406 Recycling, YES Compost and Sysco Corporation.



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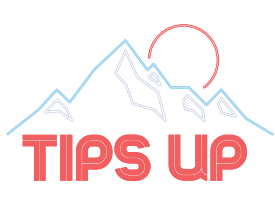
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HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT  
& OUTDOORS  
AND SPORTS

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Loved to death pg. 25

America's game:  
an avenue to community pg. 28

## Meet Big Sky's new behavioral health program officer

### Shannon Steele works to enact programming, support

BY MIRA BRODY

**BIG SKY** – In the growing town of Big Sky, behavioral health needs are on the rise, and exacerbating factors unique to mountain towns such as long winters, seclusion, lack of resources, and substance abuse problems have only made the issue more pressing.

Big Sky's Shannon Steele will be tackling these challenges, among others, head-on as the community's new behavioral health program officer.

She is devoted to addressing what she calls the "paradise paradox," or the concept of mental health issues being more prevalent underneath the picturesque mountain lifestyles portrayed in magazines. She says abolishing stigma and making resources more accessible are a powerful first step for Big Sky. The Big Sky Behavioral Health Initiative, a study that took place in 2019, revealed some of Big Sky's more serious behavioral health issues.

"They really shined a light on the fact that Montana is not excluded from national trends happening, those risk factors of suicide," said Steele of the study. "Intuitively we knew this was an issue, but this report really showed that it is, and it's reinforced by Big Sky's ski town culture."

The Yellowstone Club Community Foundation presents Steele's position in partnership with Bozeman Health, Western Montana Mental Health Center, Madison Valley Medical Center and Providence Mental Health, who all formed the Big Sky Behavioral Health Coalition in November 2020.

As the behavioral health program officer, Steele will be working full-time to support an accessible network of behavioral health services that focus on whole-person wellness and prevention within the community.

"I am committed to highlighting community voice to address behavioral health needs for individuals who live, grow, work and recreate in Big Sky, and focused on creating innovative solutions through partnership and capacity building," Steele said.

Steele has lived in Big Sky for over three years, during which time she worked as the human resources manager at the Hungry Moose Market and Deli. She has a bachelor's degree in psychology from Black Hills State University and a master's in community health and prevention sciences from Montana State University. She's an avid advocate for promoting community health through holistic and recreational ventures—she's also a certified yoga instructor and serves on the board of the Southwest Montana Mountain Bike Association's Big Sky chapter.



Shannon Steele joins the Yellowstone Club Community Foundation as their new community health officer after years building relationships as The Hungry Moose Market and Deli's HR director. PHOTO COURTESY OF SHANNON STEELE

Since she officially began her role as the coalition's health officer on June 1, Steele has been traveling around the state mapping out existing services and speaking with providers to see if they could help support Big Sky with its current behavioral health issues.

Ciara Wolfe, VP of philanthropy for YCCF, says they have recognized that backbone support for community nonprofits and behavioral health needs in the community are essential. Steele will work closely with Ruthi Solari, director of community partnerships, Dylan Thorton, outreach manager, and Whitney Brunner, annual fund director. This week, in fact, YCCF launched Volunteer Big Sky, a website devoted to connecting nonprofits with available volunteers.

"We recognize that in order to provide a spectrum of behavioral health services from prevention to treatment in the Big Sky community, it will take a lot of partners working together," Wolfe said. "We are thrilled to have Shannon in this new role to organize and help support these partners to bring the much needed services to our community."

Although a lot of the initiatives she will head up are still in the works, Steele says the primary community concerns she'd like to address are substance abuse and stigma reduction. She also wants those who need help to know that there are resources available in the community now. A list of these resources can be found in the sidebar.

Growing up, Steele found herself drawn to her friends when they were in need—she has always been the one to offer comfort and support, a trait she believes is what led her to the practice of psychology later in life. She still values that calling here in Big Sky.

"I feel so lucky to have been integrated into the community by the Hungry Moose," Steele said. "Now starting this new position and being able to interface and talking to teachers and students and HR professionals and employees, it's just broadening that community and finding a lot of common ground. Everyone wants that connection, and everyone wants that community."

Watching the community collaboration that took place when COVID-19 struck Big Sky has kept Steele optimistic about her vast new undertaking as behavioral health officer. Steele says quick collaborations like Big Sky Relief, which provided support during the pandemic, are what make Big Sky so special—anything seems possible, she says.

"There's a lot of challenges but then the opportunity is just you have to get creative," Steele said. "I think our partners are on board with thinking creatively, and if you can get that collaboration and partnerships together then you can get something to work in Big Sky."

## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH RESOURCES IN BIG SKY

Here are a list of available resources for immediate or ongoing behavioral healthcare.

### 211 HELP LINE

For you or a loved one in need.

### BIG SKY MEDICAL CENTER

506-995-6995

Licensed Therapist, Child & Adult Psychiatrist, Psychiatric Advanced Practice Nurse and Telepsychiatry.

### ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

406-585-4079

Visit [aa-montana.org](http://aa-montana.org) for schedule and location.

### MSU HUMAN DEVELOPMENT CLINIC

(406) 580-6012 | [bigskywia.org](http://bigskywia.org)

Sliding scale counseling services available.

### BIG SKY SCHOOL DISTRICT YOUTH PROGRAMMING

406-995-4281

### BIG SKY COMMUNITY FOOD BANK

406-995-3088 | [Bigskyfoodbank.org](http://Bigskyfoodbank.org)

47995 Gallatin Rd.

Groceries, Emergency Food Box Program, senior grocery program, grocery vouchers, Healthy Kidspack Program and community coatroom. Social Services: applications for food or energy assistance, tax preparation, healthcare insurance applications, COVID-related emergency financial assistance applications, referrals to low-cost legal assistance

### SANTOSHA WELLNESS CENTER

Donation-based Community Yoga and more

406-993-2510 | [Santoshabigsky.com](http://Santoshabigsky.com)

Yoga classes, private yoga sessions, massage, acupuncture, Ayurvedic body therapies and more.

### BIG SKY NATURAL HEALTH

406-993-9647 | [Bigskynaturalhealthmt.com](http://Bigskynaturalhealthmt.com)

IV nutrient therapy, naturopathic medicine, nutritional counseling, acupuncture and other bodywork services.

# Health officials urge vaccinations amidst “high” transmission

## COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations highest in months

BY MIRA BRODY

BOZEMAN – The Gallatin City-County Health Department and Bozeman Health are concerned about the rising number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in Gallatin County. As of Aug. 10, there are 154 active COVID-19 cases in Gallatin County and 10 people hospitalized with the virus, the largest spike in three months. With only 55 percent of the county currently vaccinated, health officials are concerned about the more transmissible Delta variant and the risk of further mutations.

“We’ve had Delta variant here in our community,” said county Health Officer Lori Christenson on a July 30 press call. “We should anticipate Delta variant in our community—it’s in the state, it’s in the nation, and it’s here ... COVID-19 Delta variant is currently accounting for about 80 percent of all COVID cases in the United States and is significantly more infectious.”

Kallie Kujawa, Bozeman Health COVID-19 incident command lead, says the hospital has just declared they are in an “incident” again and are in the process of stepping up their incident command system as hospitalizations rise to concerning levels.

“Within the hospitalizations that we’re seeing, the majority, in fact I think at this point in time all of them that have been hospitalized for coronavirus, are unvaccinated,” Kujawa said on the call. “We are focused on increasing our partnership with the Gallatin County Health Department, Community Health Partners, MSU and the other local community efforts to increase vaccine awareness.”

Dr. Kerrie Emerick, a pathologist with Bozeman Health, says the hospital is sending tests to the state lab to determine specific variants. Studying variants helps local health officials better understand how the virus is mutating as it continues to spread throughout the community.

Because children ages 2 through 11 are not eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine at this time, the health department is urging them to continue wearing masks, and for other

members of the community—vaccinated or unvaccinated—to do so as well to protect these young children and others who may not be able to receive the vaccine for medical reasons.

“Vaccinations continue to be the most effective strategy to prevent infection and severe disease,” said Christenson. “So those who chose to get vaccinated, kudos for doing your part, those who have not yet been vaccinated I would encourage you to get vaccinated.”

On July 27, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced their updated guidance for fully vaccinated individuals, adding a recommendation for fully vaccinated people to wear a mask in public indoor settings in areas with “substantial or high transmission.” This recommendation continues to be in place for unvaccinated people as well.

This new guidance categorizes areas of substantial or high transmission based on cases per 100,000 in the last seven days. According to CDC criteria, Gallatin County is considered to currently have “substantial” transmission.

Yellowstone, Glacier and Grand Teton national parks all now require that masks be worn indoors, including inside public transportation, by both vaccinated and unvaccinated people.

In preparation for returning students at Montana State University this fall, Tracy Ellig, vice president of university communications at MSU, says the school is implementing a vaccine incentive program to encourage students to get vaccinated before returning, as well as to get them to utilize the vaccination clinics readily available on campus. Students can show evidence of vaccination for a chance to win big-ticket items such as ski passes and Yeti coolers.

Vaccination clinics are available throughout the county. They are free for anyone both insured and uninsured, and staff are available to sit down and discuss any questions or concerns a patient may have before they decide to get vaccinated. Visit [healthygallatin.org](http://healthygallatin.org) to find a vaccination clinic near you.

## Back to School immunization clinic in Gallatin County

### Health Department to offer standard vaccines, as well as COVID-19

#### GALLATIN CITY-COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

BOZEMAN – The Gallatin City-County Health Department will be hosting a number of immunization clinics for children entering kindergarten through twelfth grade who are in need of vaccine updates. There will also be an option for kids 12 and up as well as their parents/guardians to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

#### Walk-In Immunization Clinic Details:

Tuesday, Aug. 17, 2021 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
 Thursday, Aug. 19, 2021 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.  
 Monday, Aug. 23, 2021 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
 Tuesday, Aug. 24, 2021 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

All immunization clinics will take place at the health department building located at 215 W Mendenhall St., in Bozeman. We ask that everyone 2 years old or older wear a mask while inside the building. If you do not have one, one can be provided for you. Additional COVID-19 protocols will also be in place. Please do not come to this clinic if you or a family member is sick.

#### What to Bring:

- Child’s vaccination records
- Insurance card\*
- A completed vaccine consent form (one per child)
- A completed COVID-19 consent form (if applicable)
- All of the forms can be found on our website.

\*Children with no insurance, or whose insurance does not cover vaccines, qualify for coverage under the Vaccines for Children Program.

Please note: we will charge an administration fee of \$21 per shot. There is a sliding fee scale that could reduce charges. There is no charge at this time for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Staying up to date on all recommended childhood immunizations is a vital part of a child’s overall wellness, growth, and development. The COVID-19 vaccine is one important part of keeping children healthy. We encourage all eligible children 12 and older to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Please continue to follow critical public health guidance such as wearing a mask while in indoor public places regardless of your vaccination status, maintain social distance, wash your hands, and stay home when sick.

*For more information about the back to school immunization clinics, please visit [healthygallatin.org](http://healthygallatin.org) or call us at 406-582-3100.*



As the school year approaches, the Gallatin City-County Health Department will be offering immunization clinics for children entering kindergarten through twelfth grade. PHOTO BY HAKAN NURAL COURTESY OF UNSPLASH

# Cornhole tournament bags funds for Gallatin Invasive Species Alliance

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY – Bagging a peak usually refers to the accomplishment of reaching the highest point of a mountain marked by a U.S. Geological Survey benchmark. However, on the evening of Aug. 3, Bag the Peak, a punny fundraiser hosted by the Gallatin Invasive Species Alliance, gave this well-known phrase a new meaning and raised funds by literally having people throw bags at the peak—or at least images of it.

Sixteen competitive teams of two corn hole players gathered with friends and spectators at the Crail Ranch Gardens to sip beers, eat food and throw bags of kernels not at the actual Lone Mountain but rather at images of the iconic peak printed on custom boards. The photos on the boards featured Lone Mountain at sunset and with a meadow and were donated by Kevin Fosse and Melissa Richterich of Peak Photography.



Kevin Fosse and Melissa Richterich of Peak Photography donated images of Lone Mountain to create the custom boards participants played on in the tournament. PHOTO BY JENNIFER MOHLER AND KATIE COLEMAN

custom pottery vase, a handmade benchmark trophy and, of course, bragging rights.

The benchmark was a unique prize conceived of by Mohler who was inspired by the USGS’s survey markers found at the top of peaks. Thus, Bag the Peak takes on a double meaning: in addition to tossing cornhole bags at an image of Lone Peak, victors took home a trophy to symbolize the bagging of an actual peak.

“The goal for this first year was to make it so much fun that people would be looking forward to coming back,” Mohler said of the event.

The funds raised by the tournament will support the alliance’s efforts to be a proactive force in combating invasive species which include weed pulls, community education programs and maintenance of the Crail Gardens.



The champions, Sean Efferson and Dave Harder, show off their prizes. PHOTO BY JENNIFER MOHLER AND KATIE COLEMAN

The inaugural event was the brain child of GISA Executive Director Jennifer Mohler, the alliance’s sole staff member.

Each team played four rounds and the top four teams went into the playoffs. Three of the teams were undefeated heading into the playoffs, making for some stiff competition, according to Mohler.

Sean Efferson and Dave Harder emerged as the champions of the evening, earning themselves a

After play had ended, participants were already discussing plans to make team jerseys and practice ahead of next year’s tournament. Mohler said the event was a huge success and she likes the cornhole tournament because it is family friendly, anyone can play and it gets people outside.

Now, the alliance will be auctioning off one of the custom cornhole sets in an online auction at [biddingowl.com/GallatinInvasiveSpeciesAI](http://biddingowl.com/GallatinInvasiveSpeciesAI) which will conclude on Aug. 31 at the Crail Gardens Open House.

Mohler hopes to continue holding this unique fundraiser in the future and to expand play.

“The competition was spirited, the food was delicious and the weather was perfect, which was just fantastic,” Mohler said. “We really appreciate Big Sky showing up with such spirit and sportsmanship for our first ever cornhole tournament. We look forward to seeing them next year for sure.”

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## THE NEW WEST

## Bozeman 'wolf man' given Leopold Award for career in conservation



BY TODD WILKINSON  
EBS ENVIRONMENTAL COLUMNIST

Up in the Far U.S. North, he spent months studying grizzlies on the tundra, sleeping in a tent on nights when the summer sun barely dipped below the horizon. On the other side of the thin wall of polyester, he could hear massive brown bears walking close—the shadows they cast so near he smelled their breath.

As part of his own curiosity, he studied 200 wolf skulls, discovering that a high percentage had broken jaws with missing teeth or cranium cracks where moose hooves had delivered concussive blows to lobes. "It's not easy making a living with your mouth," he says.

In northern Minnesota he would be out all night, driving a 100-mile route on backroads, stopping along the way to howl, listening for replies as a way of conducting a wolf census. Later, he would lead the return of imperiled species to ranch lands owned by Ted Turner.

His most famous contribution was being handpicked to carry out the historic reintroduction of 31 gray wolves in the mid 1990s to Yellowstone National Park, where they ironically had been exterminated.

These are just a few of the experiences that serve as mileposts in a career Mike Phillips reflects upon as having three very different yet interwoven parts: that of field scientist grinding out research day by day on public land, helping to write a new chapter for wildlife conservation on private land, proving that saving imperiled species need not be a major burden for property owners; and then having a lengthy stint as an elected public official in the Montana Legislature.

In July, Phillips was informed that he would receive the Aldo Leopold Memorial Award, the top honor bestowed by The Wildlife Society, one of the most respected professional organizations in the realm of wildlife science.

In addition to Phillips' field assignments in the Southeast and Yellowstone, he was an advisor in emphasizing the real natural history of wolves before Coloradans went to the polls in 2020 and passed a resolution that compelled the state game agency to restore wolves there in 2023. He also, this spring, helped orchestrate Mexican gray wolves being released on Ted Turner's Ladder Ranch in New Mexico.

Not long ago, I had a chat with Phillips.

**TODD WILKINSON:** *The sum of your career has been, in many ways, a series of predictable and unpredictable meanderings through the ideals spelled out by Leopold in "A Sand County Almanac" and other writings and talks he gave. Why do you take heart in receiving the Leopold award?*

**MIKE PHILLIPS:** Because the award stands as testimony to a professional life—Leopold's—well led and one given to others I greatly admire who have been fearless and strove to emulate his insistence that that we behold Nature with highest respect for what she is constantly trying to teach us.

**T.W.:** *Why do we bother bringing species back from the brink or give them a second chance in places where they were extirpated?*

**M.P.:** Restoration of imperiled species is a direct and effective response to the extinction crisis, and as such should motivate everyone everywhere. We are now firmly in the grip of the sixth great extinction crisis to envelope the planet over the last 500 million years. Notably, the crisis is humanity's most pressing yet least-attended problem. Its redress should matter to everyone everywhere. Why? If you are a person of faith, the crisis should matter because how can you love the Creator and not love the

Creation? And how can anyone stand by and watch something they love needlessly destroyed?

**T.W.:** *Now that you've had a quarter-century to reflect on wolf reintroduction in Yellowstone with facts that silenced the hysteria of naysayers, yet given what happened in 2021 with state legislatures and governors in Montana and Idaho sanctioning potential re-decimation of wolf populations in these states, what's so hard for people to accept about wolves?*

**M.P.:** People struggle to accept that which they do not understand. Since many folks have only a rudimentary understanding of the importance of wild, self-willed nature, they tend to deeply discount or set aside altogether important ecological processes like predation. From there it is a small step to discount or set aside altogether the importance of predators like the wolf.

**T.W.:** *You're a scientist but, like journalists, you push back against distortion of biological facts and contentions that do not hold up to scrutiny. What's the most troubling pertaining to wolves?*

**M.P.:** The most egregious claims about wolves are that they represent a threat to human safety, the livestock industry, and the recreational, big game killing industry. They do not.

**T.W.:** *After you cofounded the Turner Endangered Species Fund with Ted Turner, you went into politics, and were elected to a couple of terms each in the Montana House and Senate. What drove you to run?*

**M.P.:** I was motivated to seek elected office by my belief that conservation science needs to be applied, otherwise it is useless. I thought that a good way to help apply that science was earning a seat at decision-making tables by winning elections. By science, I mean nothing more than the systematic accumulation of reliable knowledge.

**T.W.:** *That sounds sensible. But were you a bit too idealistic?*

**M.P.:** Sadly, as a 14-year legislator, I learned that far too many elected officials are ignorant of science—how it is best assembled and how it is best applied—and quite comfortable making important, sometimes life-and-death decisions based on unreliable knowledge. By doing so, they belittle the importance of their service and shortchange Montanans.

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



Biologist Mike Phillips, in gray at left, played a leading role in the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone. Also pictured here are the late Mollie Beatty, head of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Yellowstone Superintendent Mike Finley, and in blue then Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. PHOTO BY JIM PEACO/NPS



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## Two Western states act to control methane

BY TIM LYDON  
WRITERS ON THE RANGE



New Mexico, the third-ranking U.S. oil producer, has moved to curtail methane pollution from the oil and gas industry, moving it closer to neighboring Colorado's leadership. Methane is a dangerous greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change and also damages human health.

With the United States among the world's top methane polluters, and the Biden administration promising tighter nationwide rules, these two Western states set a bar for other states to follow.

For decades, the oil and gas industry has freely discharged the colorless pollutant from tens of thousands of wells as a cost-savings measure. Then this March, New Mexico banned the wasteful venting and flaring of natural gas, which is comprised almost entirely of methane. New Mexico is only the third state, after Colorado and Alaska, to ban the practice.

This May, New Mexico also proposed a final rule to staunch leaking of methane from across the state's oil and gas supply chain, which includes part of the mammoth Permian Basin it shares with Texas. The leaking occurs at well pads, pipelines, compressors, storage facilities and more.

It's a system-wide problem that generates methane plumes large enough to detect from space.

The proposed rule on leaking, now up for public comment, improves on a December draft that offered broad loopholes. When it's made final, it will require regular inspection and repair of leaky equipment, which today goes largely unmitigated as yet another industry cost-savings measure.

The state effort means New Mexico is catching up with Colorado. In 2014, Colorado became the first state to regulate methane and has twice strengthened its original rule. Colorado has also modernized its oil and gas regulatory agency's mission so that it includes safeguarding public health. And it is reworking oil and gas bonding requirements so taxpayers don't get burdened with plugging leaky "orphan wells" abandoned by producers.

Colorado's rules were a model for the first national methane regulations, implemented under former President Barack Obama in 2016. Unfortunately, the Trump administration dismantled those rules.

Controlling methane is a climate imperative. Because the gas has 80 times the heat-trapping potential of carbon dioxide, it's a potent driver of climate change. NASA says it has fueled a whopping 25 percent of the human-caused global warming that today increasingly jeopardizes Western water, agriculture and recreation.

Research also shows that methane is entering the atmosphere from sources such as wetlands or thawing permafrost. In the latter, warming tied to methane begets more methane. It is the ominous type of feedback loop that global warming alarmists have warned us about for decades.

But the good news is that methane only survives in the atmosphere for about 10 years, unlike the centuries-long lifespan of carbon dioxide. Consequently, methane rules today could produce swift returns on climate as the world grapples with the harder problem of carbon dioxide.

Methane and associated pollutants also contribute to harmful ground-level ozone, which is linked to premature birth, respiratory sickness and other illnesses. New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham made this part of her campaign for regulation, pointing out that poor air quality disproportionately harms poor communities.

That concern helped build support from Indigenous and other groups, outweighing fears that new regulations would detract from drilling royalties, which provide over a third of New Mexico's revenue for education, health and other services.

Part of the New Mexico governor's strategy in winning support for methane control was focusing on fiscal accountability. Venting, flaring, and leaking – all monumentally wasteful practices – send an estimated \$43 million in potential state revenue into New Mexico's thin air every year.

At the national level, President Joe Biden campaigned on restoring federal methane regulations rolled back under former President Donald Trump. Biden issued executive orders on his first day in office that set a September goal for proposing a new strategy. Crafting new federal rules is expected to take years, but New Mexico and Colorado now offer strong examples. By applying rules to both new and existing oil and gas infrastructure, they exceed the original Obama regulations, which only addressed new permits.

Today, Western states, along with heavy oil producers Texas and North Dakota, offer only a patchwork of tax incentives and voluntary targets. Limited rules, however, often tilt in industry's favor. Now, with fossil fuel production ramping back up and global temperatures rising, New Mexico and Colorado show that tougher regulations are the way to go.

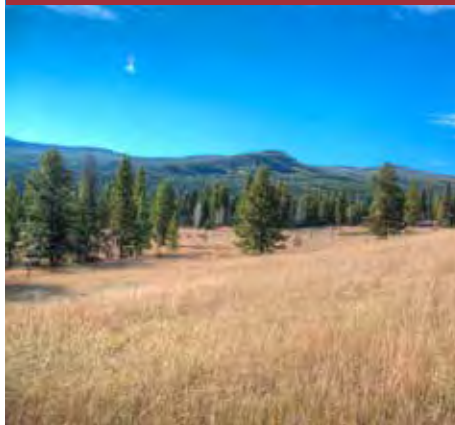
*Tim Lydon is a contributor to Writers on the Range, [writersontherange.org](http://writersontherange.org), a nonprofit dedicated to spurring lively conversation about the West. He writes from Alaska.*

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# Loved to death: Ousel Falls Trail experiences growing pains

## Big Sky's favorite trail sees record visitors

BY KATIE ALVIN  
EBS CONTRIBUTOR

*Editor's note: A version of this story originally ran in a 2015 edition of EBS. As the community grows, we've revisited the article with updated information so we can continue to care for our local trail.*

BIG SKY – Ousel Falls Trail, a favorite for locals and visitors alike, is one of Big Sky's main attractions. But easy, year-round access to spectacular scenery means this busy trail is impacted like no other natural area in the region.

Hikers are reporting signs of misuse, and even vandalism in increasing numbers along the trail to the Big Sky Community Organization, the nonprofit organization that manages this and many other local trails. Trees along the trail have been damaged, a picnic table was thrown into the river, and illegal campfires have been built.

Big Sky has many local landmarks, but Ousel Falls is an icon. This 100-foot waterfall pours over dramatically fractured sedimentary cliffs and impresses visitors year-round, with raging waters in spring, gentler pools in summer, and dramatic winter ice features.

An infrared-laser trail monitor tracks the number of users on Ousel Falls Trail and in July of 2021 alone, 19,836 people walked the trail. Though 2021 isn't over yet, the projected number of annual users for this year is almost 90,000. In the past, according to BSCO Asset Manager Jeff MacPherson, the highest number of annual users was 65,000.

The popularity of the trail is clear, but the impacts may not be so obvious. The Ousel Falls area boasts dramatic geology. Exposed cliffs of sandstone, mudstone and siltstone make for idyllic scenery, but also pose great challenges for trail maintenance.



The iconic Ousel Falls waterfall awaits hikers at the end of Ousel Falls Trail featuring rushing waters in the spring and gorgeous ice features in the winter. PHOTO BY TUCKER HARRIS

"The actual trail was built really well when it was first built, so that's sustaining right now," MacPherson said. "A couple of years ago we had a whole section wash out, we've had some bigger projects that we've had to fix on the trail."

Otherwise, MacPherson said maintenance of the trail is largely focused on the trailhead bathrooms and parking lot area. Now, parking has become a big issue with spillover parking stretching down the side of the main road after the lot fills up. One solution in the works is to add a Skyline bus stop at the Ousel Falls trailhead, according to MacPherson.

Though usage is up, MacPherson emphasized that water is the main force that damages the trail.

"In the near future we want to resurface the trail and correct our drainages out there," he said.

Retaining walls help support the trail against fragile cliff walls. Logs and rocks line the path to keep hikers on the trail, and are critical to minimizing the risk of landslides.

Switchbacks are built to prevent pathways that follow the shortest, straightest route down the hillside. They keep rainwater and snowmelt from pouring down the hillside, carrying with it precious soil and ground cover.

The Ousel Falls area's fragile cliffs and soils make erosion a serious issue—cutting off trails restores the path of least resistance and accelerates erosion, which not only damages delicate vegetation but could also create conditions for a much larger landslide.

Humans aren't the only travelers going off trail. Leashes aren't required in Gallatin County, but in sensitive terrain or busy public areas they're a wise choice. While humans can be conscientious about staying on designated trails, dogs tend to roam and run well beyond the boundaries, disturbing native vegetation and fragile soils. Keeping your dog close at hand is better for the park and its people.

Like many area trails, animal waste left behind by neglectful dog owners continues to be a problem, even though dog waste bags are offered at the trailhead. Picking up your pet's waste will encourage others to do so as well.

Public use throughout the day is welcome and encouraged by BSCO, but its trails and public areas are closed after 10 p.m., aside from special events. Late-night use of the Ousel Falls area often includes illegal campfires, which threaten forests and neighboring residents, and are especially dangerous with the current burn ban in place. Inappropriate after-hours behavior can also lead to thoughtless vandalism, which damages the park for other users.

Despite BSCO regulations that prohibit firearms on their property, people have fired shotguns at old growth trees. Axes have also damaged trees, and logs placed to delineate trail boundaries have been thrown into the South Fork—in one instance in 2014, a picnic table wound up in the river.

Every community member can help educate other users about proper trail etiquette. Be positive. Try something like, "You probably don't know that we have a rare orchid here. We stay on the hiking paths so we don't accidentally damage it." Or maybe pick up a piece of fallen rock and say, "Check out this cool rock. See how easily it crumbles? That's why we all try to stay on the trail."

Grab an extra dog-waste bag before you start your hike. If you see someone leaving something behind, hand the bag over and say, "BSCO gives out free dog bags at the top of the trail. I have an extra for you." It's embarrassing to have your ignorance pointed out, so the trick is to be kind and helpful, not to shame people into better stewardship.

BSCO manages 100 acres of land, 23.25 miles of trails, and runs several community programs, including Camp Big Sky and the Big Sky Softball League. An active team of volunteers is critical and BSCO launched a trail ambassador program in 2015, which seeks volunteers to hike the local trails, pick up trash, look for maintenance issues and educate users.

Contact Program Director Mackenzie Johnson at [mackenzie@bscomt.org](mailto:mackenzie@bscomt.org) if you're interested in volunteering for the trail ambassador program. Visit [bscomt.org](http://bscomt.org) to learn more about Big Sky's parks and trails, and the other programs it offers.

Katie Alvin has worked with several nonprofit organizations during her 28 years living in Big Sky. She is a past co-chair of Education and Outreach for the BSCC trails committee and she currently serves as the development director of the Arts Council of Big Sky.



# EDDY Line

## International angling travel right now: not your parent's travel experience

BY PATRICK STRAUB  
EBS FISHING COLUMNIST

A few months ago, when the outlook for our late-summer stream flows and fishing conditions painted a bleak picture, I serendipitously got a call from a good friend of mine. He was inviting me to join him for a week of chasing tarpon and permit on some far-away saltwater flats.

In the past, high summer in our region meant consistent dry-fly fishing in clear and cold water. This year's drought and anomalous lack of water in our rivers and streams, which was easy to forecast in late spring, meant my desire to chase fish might be better served elsewhere. I jumped at the opportunity to give myself and the fish a break from the smoke and the heat.

"The plan is to fish in late July and early August," he told me. "Because that's when the tarpon are thick and the moon is best for permit."

The last time I boarded an airplane was March 7, 2020. I was returning from a fishing trip in South America and barely made it back before the world shut down. Over 500 days later, I headed for Belize to resume my international angling travel experience, one that has unsurprisingly changed immensely.

For those anglers itching to pack up their fishing stoke and take to new waters, here are some tips to manage what is likely to be the new normal for fishing in the far-off places in the world.

Plan early. When the pandemic shut down travel in 2020, most lodges, outfitters and guides throughout the world canceled trips. Most of these trips were pushed to 2021 or later, creating very limited availability at many destinations. Many destinations are already booked during their prime seasons, so if you're thinking of an international trip, start planning early.



As more countries open up to travel, the dawn of angling travel returns. Because administration and infrastructure is different throughout the world, it is important to keep the proper perspective when planning and making an international fly fishing trip during this time. PHOTO BY PATRICK STRAUB

Be flexible. The pandemic is far from over. For several of the world's top fishing destinations, their countries and local governments are still navigating the best approach to keep their citizens safe while striving to allow visitors. From changing entry restrictions to travel disruptions, be prepared to roll with some punches.

Get vaccinated. To be blunt: If you want to travel to fish internationally in the coming years, get the shot. Even as countries require negative tests for entry, many lodges and outfitters are still requiring visitors be vaccinated. Most fishing lodges are small, intimate operations and interactions with other guests from a variety of places is common. The science behind vaccines is accepted and being vaccinated reduces risk and gets us closer to ending this pandemic.

It is not always about you. No question you've earned the opportunity for a great fishing trip, but if you're making the choice to travel to a remote destination to fish, look beyond the mirror and think about the impacts of your decision to travel and your actions once at your destination. The first step is getting vaccinated. The next step is respecting the

rules and regulations at your destination. Lastly, be courteous and conscious to residents and staff. You may be getting away from the hustle and bustle of the rat race we've created here in the U.S., but practice respect and understanding when visiting a rural area so the residents and staff continue to welcome visitors.

Angling travel is still a moving target and will be for the years ahead. However, if you take a thoughtful approach to both planning and being a visitor, your trip and the trips of others are important first steps to get us all closer to what life was like prior to the world shutting down.

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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## Crail Ranch Trail

BY SARA MARINO  
EBS CONTRIBUTOR

The Crail Ranch Trail is a 2.6-mile roundtrip, leisurely path that traces the historic Crail Ranch Meadow, named after Big Sky's early homesteaders.

The flat, gravel surface is welcoming to any ability or type of trail user. You can access the trail by parking either at the Big Sky Community Park off Little Coyote Road, or at the Crail Ranch Homestead Museum on Spotted Elk Road.

Be sure to leave time for a side trip to the museum. The grounds are open every day during daylight hours for self-guided walking tours and picnicking.

The newest feature, the Crail Ranch Native Demonstration Garden, is now in full bloom. Big Sky's first garden project has emerged through collaborative efforts between the Gallatin Invasive Species Alliance, Gallatin River Task Force, Big Sky Water and Sewer District, the Historic Crail Ranch Homestead Museum and Big Sky Community Organization.

The garden is an outdoor classroom that showcases more than 700 native, wildlife-friendly and water-wise plants. The outdoor classroom will be used as an instructional tool for residents, visitors and students and will help our community understand that beautifully landscaped gardens can be sustained in a water-challenged environment. Water meters have been installed to track how native plants save water over time.



The Crail Ranch Trail's newest feature is a native plant garden that features 700 different species. PHOTO BY SARA MARINO

There are also community vegetable garden beds that can be reserved for use by contacting Historic Crail Ranch Coordinator Kimberly Pechishev at [crailranch@bscomt.org](mailto:crailranch@bscomt.org).

Hop on the Crail Ranch Trail and take a trip back in time and try to imagine what Big Sky was like those many years ago, while enjoying efforts made to keep it sustainable for the future.

### Trail Stats

**Distance:** 2.6 miles roundtrip

**Difficulty:** easy

**Elevation:** 6,285 feet

**Surface:** gravel

**Uses:** walk, run and bike

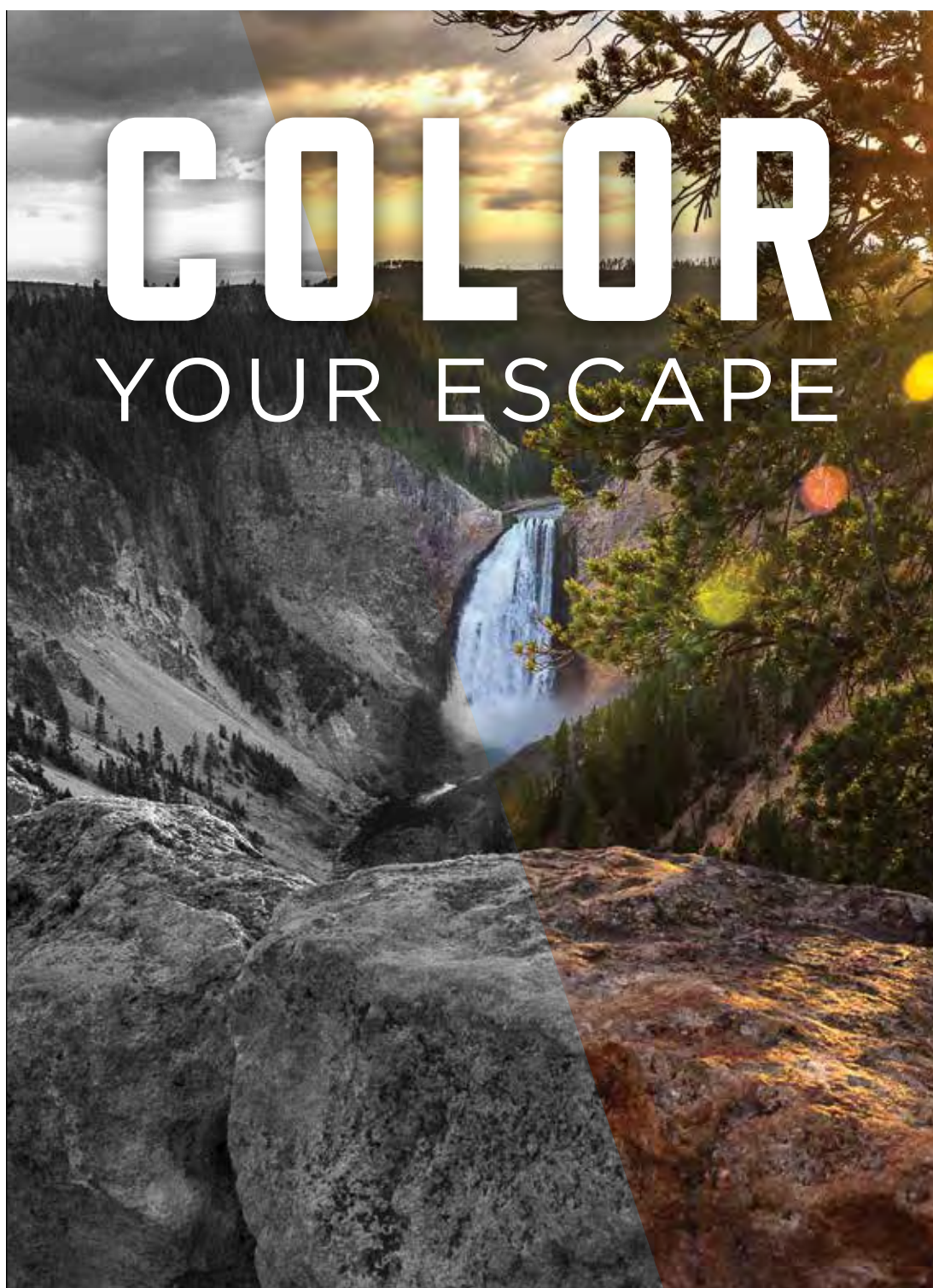
**Directions:** From Meadow Village, head north on Little Coyote Road. Travel past the Big Sky Chapel and turn onto the first road on your right.

Look for the Big Sky Community Park entrance sign and turn right. The trailhead is immediately on the left-hand side and there's parking near the softball fields.

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

*Sara Marino is the development manager for the Big Sky Community Organization.*

*Originally published in a 2019 edition of EBS.*



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# America's game: an avenue to community



The Belgrade Bandits won the 12U Montana State Championship on July 11 clinching their win with a 4-1 victory over the Gallatin Outlaws. PHOTO BY DAVE PECUNIES

BY MATT MORRIS  
EBS GUEST COLUMNIST

As I wake up this morning, I can't help but smile for many of the same reasons we all share: the pure beauty of the mountains, the freestone rivers, and the endless opportunities to explore. Today's smile is different though. It comes from a place deeply rooted inside me.

For many years I, along with my wife Heather, came to Big Sky in order to escape the daily grind of life from real world USA. Every October I couldn't wait to leave behind the chaotic nature of being a Major League Baseball pitcher. Big Sky was my place to unwind, relax, reflect and ski. It was a place to forget about baseball; a place where no one cared who you were or what you did; a place that made us feel at home, one that made me smile.

After hanging up my cleats and raising a family here it has been nothing short of exceptional. What brought me here was the idea of what life after baseball could be: how I could ski and fish; how I could feel free and unconfined; how the spotlight would dim and a life could begin.

What was not part of the equation was the sense of community I stumbled upon--the village it takes to raise kids the right way. It's the friendly wave, the well-timed tow strap and the unwavering support from neighbors. I guess, they're the same things that make us all smile.

In my professional days I mostly smiled too. I was lucky enough to play 12 years of Major League Baseball as a starting pitcher. In my opinion, the greatest life in sports, except for the actual games, is difficult. Most of my career was spent with the St. Louis Cardinals before becoming a free agent and signing with the San Francisco Giants. Then, feeling the business side of sports, I was traded to the Pittsburgh Pirates.

To compete at the highest level in sports is both exhilarating and terrifying. To put your talent to the test against the best in the world is an opportunity to measure your true character. How you deal with the adversity while in the spotlight is more than just baseball. It is who you are, not what you are, that makes you great.

Baseball, like life, is a game of failure. It tests your patience. It shines a spotlight on you for just a second to see if you decide to do the right thing. Baseball finds you when you are not looking for it. It humbles you when you think you have it.

My smile this morning comes from yet another baseball memory. In a sport that has given me so much, it continues to be a gift in my life. Even though I tried to move

far away from baseball, it has found me once again. Never did I think these memories would come on a dusty field in small town Montana.

I have had the great privilege of coaching a group of young baseball stars for the last four years. Together, we have learned America's game, our game. It has come with some highs and many lows. It has come with a little blood, some broken bones and a lot of tears. It has been filled with slumps and bad hops.

There were beanballs on cold nights and bruised egos on warm ones. It was the doctor's kid to the plumber's boy to the son of a rancher completing a 6-4-3 double play. It's a blazing fastball thrown by the mechanic's boy after years of catch in the backyard; the frozen rope hit by the math teacher's son to send the game into extra innings; the fireman's youngest blocking home plate for the final out. It's a community coming together to create pure magic on a field in the shape of a diamond. There is no clock in baseball, only time. Enough time to break your heart and enough time to fill it back up.

Well, this season, my team of a dozen 12-year-old boys recently played their hearts out on a scorching hot weekend in Miles City. It was more of a perfect mediocrity than a flawed brilliance but nonetheless we persevered. As their coach, mentor and sometimes babysitter I am proud to call this team the Montana State Champions.

I will never forget what this team has done for this old washed-up ex-player. I will remember their teamwork, sacrifice and unselfish play. They will remember the ice cream after the games. I will replay the final out as if it was the seventh game of the world series, as they play whiffle ball on a side field. It's innocent and it's pure. I can only hope they will look back on this magical season with the same love and joy it gave me. Maybe one day while having a catch in the backyard with their own child, they can tell them about the summer of 2021.

Now, it's on to the Pacific Northwest Regionals in Meridian, Idaho, to compete against teams twice our size with cities triple the population.

It's a level of baseball that is far beyond waiting for the snow to melt, a level where turf fields replace lawn mowers and batting cages are the norm. But maybe, just maybe, the baseball gods will look down on us and reward us for all the hard work we put in. Win, lose or draw, my heart is full once again.

*Matt Morris is the head coach of the Belgrade Bandits All-Star baseball team which won the 12U Montana State Championship on July 11. The team also competed in the Pacific Northwest Regional Tournament at Meridian, Idaho on July 22 - 25.*



## Is the Olympic spirit still alive?

BY AL MALINOWSKI  
EBS SPORTS COLUMNIST

I struggled to watch the Olympics this year. Between athletes who represent Team USA protesting during our national anthem and debates on whether an athlete's decision to quit during the team gymnastics competition made her a hero or a coward, I found myself quickly losing interest. I watch the Olympics to be inspired, and I was finding the opposite to be true.

I remember the pride our country showed when our national teams found success in previous worldwide competitions. When the 1980 men's hockey team orchestrated the "Miracle on Ice", it seemed everyone wanted to mirror the heart and determination of players like Jimmy Craig or Mike Eruzione.

Similarly, years later, as the women's national soccer team experienced World Cup and Olympic success, we all admired the drive and motivation of Brandi Chastain and Briana Scurry. Besides serving as outstanding role models, these athletes appeared genuinely grateful for the opportunity to represent our nation at the highest level of competition in their sports.

I didn't initially find that same spirit as I watched the Olympics this time. It seemed the attention focused on controversy, rather than stories of teamwork and overcoming adversity to achieve success. I nearly tuned the Olympics out.

As it turned out, the competitive spirit I was looking for was still there. I just had to find a way to cut through all the noise to see it. And the solution was simple, though I found it by accident. I turned on the television...without the volume.

Once I did that, I found the spirit of the Olympics was still very much alive. I witnessed the mutual admiration and respect that many athletes share as competitors congratulated each other at the end of a competition.

I saw some athletes overwhelmed with joy as they surprised their country with an unexpected medal. In those same competitions, I watched as the favorite, certainly drowning in disappointment, mustered the courage to compliment the winner before undoubtedly finding a place to begin to accept the outcome.

Numerous times I saw athletes who, while their performance did not merit a medal, left the sporting venue with pride as they knew that had given their all.

As our local high school teams are beginning practice for their fall sports seasons, I think there is much that parallels my experience with the Olympics. It's easy to become frustrated when student-athletes make poor decisions on or off the field that indicate a lack of respect for their community or their teammates. Similarly, some parents can make it uncomfortable to attend games, when they routinely (and loudly) notify the referees of their superior ability to recognize rule infractions or second-guess the coach's game plan from the stands. Often these isolated incidents attract too much attention, which can distract from the subtle but more intriguing achievements taking place in the games.

When you cut through that noise and turn off the volume, so to speak, there are numerous examples of young athletes in our community overcoming adversity and submitting themselves to the challenge of competition. Regardless of the game's outcome, there will be unexpected moments of inspiration and disappointment. Both can be teachable moments for the athletes and the fans alike.

I know how disheartened some of our teams would feel when the opposing team's fans outnumbered ours at some of our home games. This season, I encourage the Big Sky community to attend Lone Peak and Ophir home games and support the competitive spirit that is developing in our local athletes. Though it may not be the Olympics, I'm certain the coaches are preparing the athletes to provide an effort we can all be proud to watch.

*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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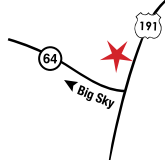


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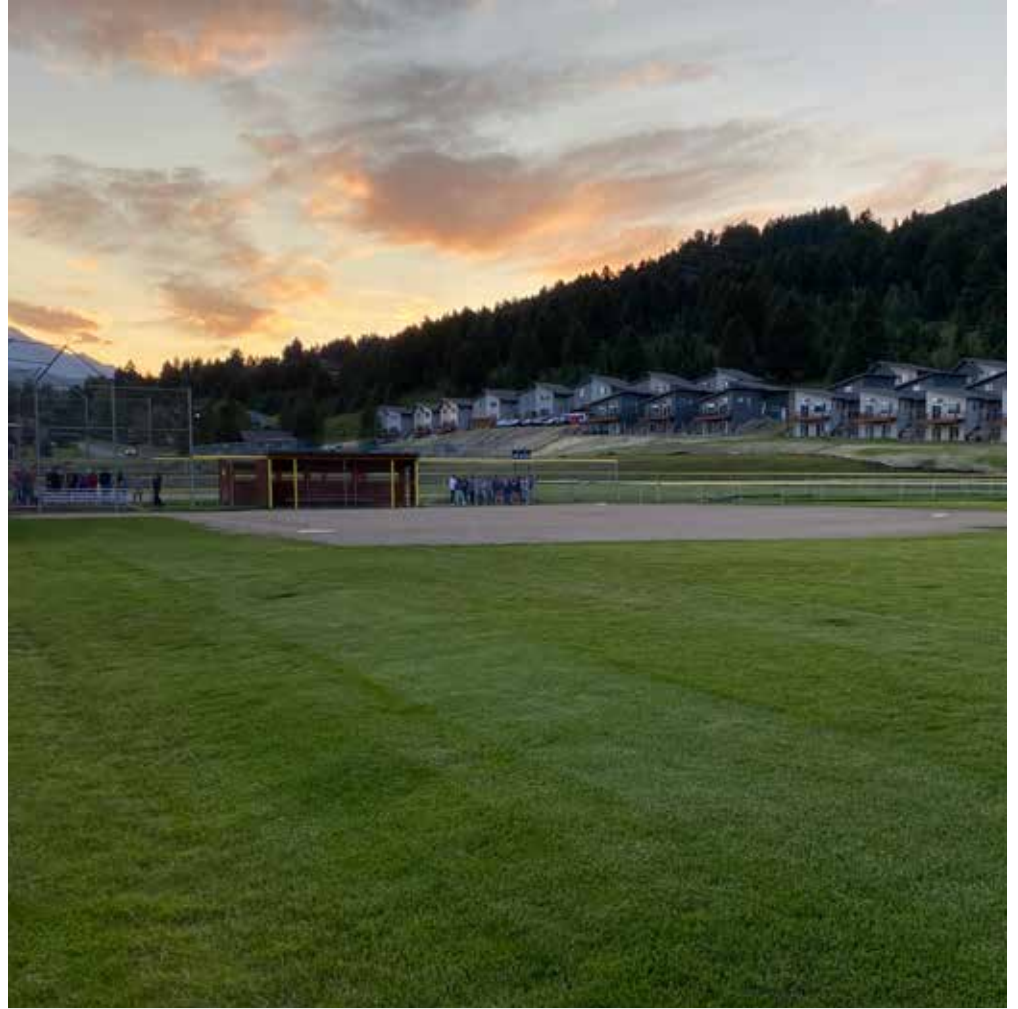
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# BIG SKY SOFTBALL 2021

These are the standings for weeks nine and 10 of play for the Big Sky Co-ed Softball League as of Aug. 8. There is one more week left of regular play followed by the End of Season Tournament on Aug. 28 and 29.

TEAM NAME	WIN/LOSS
1. LPC Golden Goats	10-0
2. Hillbilly Huckers	11-1
3. Bears	10-2
4. Yeti Dogs	10-4
5. Milkies	9-4
6. Cab Lizards	7-7
7. Yellowstone Club	7-4
8. Lotus Pad	6-6
9. The Cave	6-7
10. Westfork Wildcats	5-5
11. Mooseketeers	5-9
12. Bombers	2-11
13. Big Sky Ballers	1-10
14. Rubes	1-10
15. Mullets	0-14



On the evening of Aug. 9, players gathered under a clear sky for the for the second-to-last week of regular play. PHOTO BY JOE O'CONNOR

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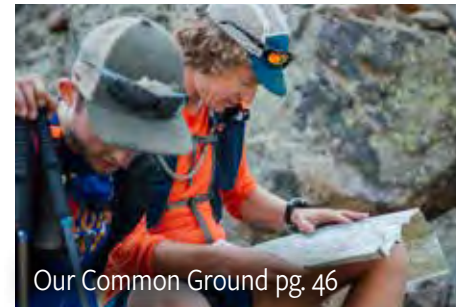
## SECTION 3:

A&E, BUSINESS, DINING  
AND FUN

Mother-daughter artist duo pg. 36



Sun Dial pg. 41



Our Common Ground pg. 46

## SLAM Festivals adapt to bring art to community

BY MIRA BRODY

BOZEMAN – Sandra Wright Sutherland of Bozeman sits in her booth at the Support Local Artists and Musicians Festivals surrounded by her life's work, consisting of a pile of books containing 30-years of photography and colorful oil paintings. It's a warm summer afternoon on Saturday, Aug. 7, and the former art student, teacher, road biker and 30-year velodrome bicycle racing photographer took up painting during the pandemic and began creating renditions of her photography, but with a vibrant palette.

"It's a fun sport, a really colorful sport," Sutherland said. "I used to do black and white photography, except that with bike racing, there's just too much for black and white. So the color was the thing I always liked to do the best. So I now I get to do what I like to do, which is paint pictures of color and shape—it's what I'm particularly interested in."

In her booth, Sutherland is in the company of her paintings, as well as the book she wrote, "NO BRAKES! Bicycle Track Racing in the United States," which depicts the front and behind the scenes lives of many famous gold medalists. Her whole life is in this tent, she says.

“It's super important to support this community because they really do enrich all of our lives in ways that we're not always aware of”

Sutherland isn't the only booth at SLAM who lives and breathes her craft—it's what the 10-year nonprofit festival aims to support. The nonprofit's executive director, Callie Miller, founded the organization on the belief that local artists and musicians should be celebrated as working professionals who are celebrated for their contributions to the community.



While SLAM Festivals have usually taken place solely at Bogert Park, this year the 46 artist booths were spread out among three locations: Bogert Park, Story Mansion Park and the Emerson Lawn. PHOTO BY MIRA BRODY

The event takes place during the same weekend as the city's historic Sweet Pea Festival for the Arts, as a free option for families. In its conception, it was a way to counteract Sweet Pea, with their popularity and admission fees, with a low-cost alternative.

"It makes you feel completely different when you drink your coffee out of a beautiful mug when you had a conversation with the person who made that mug," Miller said during a phone interview with EBS. "It's enriching in ways that we don't always think of and SLAM is committed to fostering those connections."

Art lovers from across the Gallatin Valley strolled between each of the three SLAM Festival locations in Bozeman's Historic District. After a 2020 with a virtual and adapted SLAM due to pandemic restrictions, the nonprofit is back and heeding the health of the community in a unique twist.

While SLAM Festivals have usually taken place solely at Bogert Park, this year the 46 artist booths were spread out among three locations: Bogert Park, Story Mansion Park and the Emerson Lawn. Not only did the new layout allow artists and guests to adhere to health department guidelines, but it also offered a fresh experience for those adventurous enough to bike or walk to each location.



Sandra Wright Sutherland is a former velodrome bicycle racing photographer who has turned her craft into color paintings. PHOTO BY MIRA BRODY

"Response has been super positive," Miller said the day of the festival, watching eagerly as guests filled into the Emerson lawn. "The artists are really appreciating it."

By 11:30 a.m., just a half hour after opening, all three locations were bustling with art admirers.

At each location guests perused a variety of art, watched live art demonstrations, grabbed local bites from a variety of food trucks and some even received their COVID-19 vaccine.

The Bozeman Community Kiln at the Emerson Lawn was abuzz with children as BCK teachers signed up families for a make-your-own ornament demonstration. Megan Sprenger, BCK's education director and pottery teacher, says demonstrations and hands-on activities at an event like SLAM allow kids to understand the amount of work that goes into much of the art on display.

"The kids really want to enjoy something fun, and to be able to touch and experience clay brings a whole new meaning to the ways of making," Sprenger said. "I think allowing the community to get to touch and play really helps them to understand a little bit about the process of how people in the community here make their work too, so we were really excited to be able to do our own little demo booth here."

From comical profanities cross-stitched onto tea towels by Thread Parade, to artfully designed topographic posters of area mountain ranges by North Fork Mapping's Allison Throop, to graphic t-shirts by Made Graphic Design's Renata Strauss, this year's SLAM had a little bit of everything for the local art lover.

"It's super important to support this community because they really do enrich all of our lives in ways that we're not always aware of," Miller said. "Anytime we have the opportunity to do a public installation for art, this is the community from which we would draw. Having those relationships not just in a municipal scale but also in our day-to-day lives makes a really impactful difference."

If you were unable to attend this year's SLAM Festivals, you can visit [slamfestivals.org](http://slamfestivals.org) to shop artists' websites or donate to the nonprofit.



SLAM featured unique graphic t-shirts by Made Graphic Design's Renata Strauss and sister Joanna Anderson. PHOTO BY MIRA BRODY

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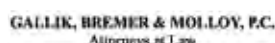
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# Mother-daughter artist duo turn Western inspirations into explorative artwork



Whitney Hall, left, in her home studio with a remarkably organized paint palette in front of her. Terry Hall, right, smiles with her painting Ancient Medicine II behind her.

BY JULIA BARTON  
PHOTOS BY JULIA BARTON

BOZEMAN — Self-described “oil-ish” painter Whitney Hall, 34, stands in her laundry-room-turned-art-studio, adding pencil atop layers of resin and oil paint to form a portrait of a speckled horse. Less than 20 minutes across town her mother, Terry Hall, 68, works on an oil painting of a woman in a spotted hat, the Bridger Mountains peeking through her window.

Hailing from San Diego, California, the two made their way to Bozeman in 2008, letting inspirations of the West incite growth in their artistic careers.

Terry’s art education began with a focus in fashion design illustration, inspiring her to attend workshops and classes geared toward the subject whenever she could. However, time and circumstance ultimately led her to transition her skills into a land planning corporation.

The artist homeschooled Whitney, bringing her to work and allowing her to crawl under drafting tables and color on scrap plans. “It was a lot of making things look like something they weren’t,” said Whitney, recalling some of her mother’s mural projects, including an entire house Terry painted to look as though it was lifted straight out of a Disney movie.

As a result of Terry’s careers, Whitney spent much of her childhood immersed in a world of her mother’s creations. “I grew up just thinking that everybody did art,” she said, adding that her

aunt and grandmother were often drawing as well. In between homeschool lessons with her mother and father, the young artist was constantly drawing and coloring, fostering both a love and a talent for creating art.

As she grew older and began searching for college majors, Whitney took some introductory art classes at Palomar College in San Marcos, California, and quickly caught the attention of her instructors. As she became more immersed in these classes, she’d bring her work home to show her mother. By Whitney’s second year at Palomar, Terry had joined her in painting and pastel classes.



Whitney holds a thumbnail sketch she layered with paper, resin, paints and pencils to create a soft, brightly colored buck.

“I didn’t go into fine art because they say you can’t make any money as an artist,” said Terry. Following years in the commercial art world and a stint painting murals in southern California, Terry decided to take the leap into fine art, despite its seemingly less lucrative prospects.

The pair shared supplies and a campus parking pass, often workshoping ideas or discussing their course materials with one another. “I think it helped us progress faster than a lot of the other students just because it was constant feedback,” Whitney said, reflecting on taking art classes with her mother. “It was the buddy system,” Terry added with a smile.

As they both learned skills from the same instructors and drew from the California Impressionism art they were exposed to, their styles looked nearly identical to one another’s. “If we didn’t sign [our work] nobody would know the difference,” Whitney laughed.

The more they developed their skills, however, their styles began to diverge into something entirely their own.

After moving to Bozeman, the pair found inspiration in the Western traditions of Montana. For Terry, this manifested as portraiture of cowboys and Native women, whereas her daughter was drawn to the wildlife of the Northern Rockies, focusing largely on horses, deer and avian creatures.

Terry works primarily with oil paints, often starting with photos she captures and sketches with the final line work being enlarged by hand and transferred to a canvas. “I find an emotional draw [in a photo] that pulls me into wanting to develop that piece,” she explained.

From there, her style can differ depending on the vision she has for the piece, often blending realism with bold patterns or varying textures. Terry will sometimes paint over gold leaf, a thin gold foil glued to the canvas, allowing the gold to shine through in certain areas as she paints over with oils; other times, she’ll focus on the basics of her subject, creating a caricature-like image.

As for Whitney, she often starts with a very limited color palette, sketching her work with oil paints, making thumbnail works of horses, flowers, birds and the like on thin pieces of clear plastic. “I’ve gotten in the habit of mostly going straight into studies,” she explained, gesturing to a series of small horse heads she’d painted from different angles.

Whitney then develops these into larger works on canvas, where Whitney plays with layering techniques. For her more traditional Western art, these layers are often limited to oil paints and pencils with the occasional gold leaf.

The soft, playful nature of Whitney’s personality bleeds into her paintings through edges that blend seamlessly into the background and organic sketch-like lines peeking through the layers of oil paints. Although Whitney and her mother share elements of their figurative style, Terry’s work often features a stark contrast between subject and background, making bold statements through her work as she does with her voice.



Terry points to her painting *Undercover Angel*, explaining how she scraped oil paint off the canvas to reveal the gold leaf below in a strategic pattern.

Although inarguably strong artists in their own right, the way their work plays off one another’s style hints to how the vitality of their relationship pushed them both to new creations.

Recently, both artists have shifted their focus from Western galleries to their personal ventures, allowing more creativity and experimentation to enter their work. “I got pretty well known for [Western art,] but it drove me into a bit of a rut. I felt like everybody was expecting a certain type of art,” Whitney explained.

These days, Whitney puts a portion of her time toward teaching workshops and sells much of her work on her website. Although she still draws from Western inspiration, she’s given herself more freedom to explore layers using materials such as resin to push her boundary as an artist, opting to paint the less expected.



Whitney brushes on oil paint to a speckled horse, some angle studies, other in-progress work and a finished portrait all magnetized to her studio wall.

Terry, who agreed she too felt constrained by producing for Western galleries, has moved much of her art sales to her website as well. She is moving back to her roots, painting less Western portraiture and incorporating elements from the graphic design and pop art styles she began her art journey with.

Despite their separate studios and art styles, the mother-daughter duo still often paint and sketch together. They each continue to grow their art styles and share their knowledge with the community through workshops and lessons, and their connection, as both artists and family members, is palpable when they’re working together.

“There’s a few couples and mother-son artists, but there’s not a lot of mother and daughter artist teams in Bozeman,” Terry said, smiling at her daughter who agreed.

*See more of their art and follow their progress through their respective websites, [terrycookehall.com](http://terrycookehall.com) and [art.whitneymhall.com](http://art.whitneymhall.com).*



Photos, sketches and an in-progress painting adorn the top of Terry’s work table in her studio, with some of her finished paintings hanging on the surrounding walls.



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# BIG SKY EVENTS CALENDAR

Friday, August 13 – Thursday, August 26

*If your event falls between August 27 and September 9, please submit it by August 18 by emailing [media@outlaw.partners](mailto:media@outlaw.partners)*

## Friday, August 13

**Friday Afternoon Club: Tim Baucom and Meesch Metcalf**

Blue Buddha Sushi Lounge patio, 6 p.m.

**Bravo! Big Sky Music Festival**

Warren Miller Performing Arts Center, 7:30 p.m.

**Wild West Yellowstone Rodeo**

175 Oldroyd Rd., 7 p.m.

**Live Music: Madeline Hawthorne with Brad Parsons & The Starbirds**

Tips Up, 9 p.m.

## Saturday, August 14

**Bravo! Big Sky Music Festival**

Len Hill Park, 6 p.m.

**Wild West Yellowstone Rodeo**

175 Oldroyd Rd., 7 p.m.

**Live Music: Desperate Electric**

Tips Up, 9 p.m.

## Sunday, August 15

**Live Music: Ryan Acker**

Pine Creek Lodge, 11 a.m.

**Music on the Green: The Tiny Band**

Bozeman Public Library, 4 p.m.

Hooked on the Gallatin

Riverhouse BBQ & Events, 6 p.m.

## Monday, August 16

**Story Time**

Big Sky Community Library, 10:30 a.m.

**Burger Night with Stumpfy**

The Bunker, 6 p.m.

**Trivia Night**

Pinky G's Pizzeria, 7 p.m.

## Tuesday, August 17

**Community Acupuncture Outside**

Fire Pit Park, 10 a.m.

**Paint the Peak with Meg Buecking (kids only)**

Big Sky Community Park Pavilion, 4 p.m.

**Bozeman Farmers Market**

Lindley Park, 5 p.m.

## Wednesday, August 18

**Hike Big Sky**

Uplands and Hummocks trailhead, 9 a.m.

**Big Sky Farmers Market**

Town Center, 5 p.m.

**Wild West Yellowstone Rodeo**

175 Oldroyd Rd., 7 p.m.

**Live Music: Danger D**

Tips Up, 8 p.m.

## Thursday, August 19

**Wildflower and Weed Hike**

Beehive Basin trailhead, 10 a.m.

**Wild West Yellowstone Rodeo**

175 Oldroyd Rd., 7 p.m.

**Music in the Mountains: Laney Lou and the Bird Dogs**

Len Hill Park, 7:15 p.m.

**Live Music: Mix Master Mike**

Tips Up, 10 p.m.

## Friday, August 20

**Hike Big Sky: Tiny Treks**

South Fork Loop trailhead, 10 a.m.

**Friday Afternoon Club: Mercedes Carroll**

Blue Buddha Sushi Lounge patio, 6 p.m.

**Wild West Yellowstone Rodeo**

175 Oldroyd Rd., 7 p.m.

**Live Music: Stoneman's Way**

Tips Up, 9 p.m.

## Saturday, August 21

**Wild West Yellowstone Rodeo**

175 Oldroyd Rd., 7 p.m.

**Live Music: Smith/McKay All Day**

Tips Up, 9 p.m.

## Sunday, August 22

**Live Music: The Canoe Dealers**

Pine Creek Lodge, 11 a.m.

**Live Music: The Divides**

Bozeman Hot Springs, 7 p.m.

## Monday, August 23

**Story Time**

Big Sky Community Library, 10:30 a.m.

**Burger Night with Stumpfy**

The Bunker, 6 p.m.

**Trivia Night**

Pinky G's Pizzeria, 7 p.m.

## Tuesday, August 24

**Lunch and Storytime**

Bozeman Public Library, 12 p.m.

**Bozeman Farmers Market**

Lindley Park, 5 p.m.

## Wednesday, August 25

**Big Sky Farmers Market**

Town Center, 5 p.m.

**Live Music: Kylie Spence**

Tips Up, 8 p.m.

## Thursday, August 26

**Music in the Mountains: Erica Falls**

Len Hill Park in Town Center, 7:15 p.m.

**Live Music: Savvy**

Tips Up, 10 p.m.

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## Making it in Big Sky: Yooper Wall Systems, Inc.

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

**BIG SKY** – Growing up in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Chad Ouellette was given the moniker “Yooper,” a colloquial term used to describe those that live in the U.P. Eventually, he used his geographic identity to coin his own drywall business, Yooper Wall Systems, Inc.

Ouellette made his way out to Montana in 1987 and worked in Bozeman for a few years as a drywall finisher. Then, in 1990, his sister and brother-in-law, Doug and JoDean Bing, approached him about moving to Big Sky and managing the state liquor store Sky Spirits and Gifts. The family opened and ran the store for four years before selling it in 1994.

At that point, Ouellette started drywall finishing on his own in Big Sky while figuring out his next steps. After being teased with the name Yooper drywall, Ouellette started Yooper Wall Systems, Inc. in 1994.

“ I am just so grateful to all of the builders and contractors that took a chance on me. We have developed some great relationships over the years. ”

Now, 30 years later, he is still running a successful drywall business and jokes that he still doesn't know what his next step is.

Explore Big Sky talked with Ouellette to learn more about Yooper Wall Systems, Inc. and his favorite part of working in the drywall business. Some answers below have been edited for brevity.

**Explore Big Sky:** *When and why did you start Yooper Wall Systems, Inc.?*

**Chad Ouellette:** After the sale of the [liquor] store, I really wasn't sure what I wanted to do, so I started drywall finishing around the area until I figured out my next move.

**EBS:** *Tell me about the history of Yooper Wall Systems, Inc.? How has it grown?*

**C.O.:** I worked by myself for several years just finishing one house after another. It was pretty quiet back then, it seemed there was just enough



Chad Ouellette (center), owner and president of Yooper Wall Systems, Inc., stands with some of his crew who have been with him for many years. PHOTO COURTESY OF CHAD OUELLETTE

work to get by. I was able to add a few employees over the years, when in 2005 all hell broke loose. The building boom was on! Within a year we went from drywall finishing with six to eight employees to having 60 people working in the field. I don't think I slept very well that year.

**EBS:** *How big is your team?*

**C.O.:** We now run 40 to 50 people in the field, I am very blessed to have a great staff that manages it for me.

**EBS:** *What inspired the name of your business?*

**C.O.:** I grew up in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, they call us Yoopers back there from Upper [Michigan.] That's how I got the name of my business.

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

**C.O.:** We really specialize in custom homes. We stock and install all of our own sheetrock and we have crews that do drywall finishing, veneer and Venetian plaster, exterior stucco, acoustical grid and tile, and sound abatement systems.

**EBS:** *What is your area of service?*

**C.O.:** For 20 years, I lived here in Big Sky, and worked out of my garage. My office was in my house. Twelve years or so ago we moved down to Gallatin Gateway and I have a nice big shop and an office there just a mile north of Gallatin Gateway and we work out of there now. We work all over the state but most of what we do is right here in the valley.

**EBS:** *What is the best part of working at Yooper Wall Systems, Inc.?*

**C.O.:** The plaster division gets me out of bed every day, it's very creative. For years we have done veneer plaster and over the last few years the Italian Venetian plaster world has exploded. It's ever-changing every day and trying to keep up with all the techniques, the different colors and finishes, it's challenging and it's very rewarding.

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

**C.O.:** A bit of advice I got from an architect during the recession, he said, “Chad the key is to keep up your quality. Don't jeopardize your quality and you will be just fine.” I always remembered that and we try to focus on our quality every day.

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

**C.O.:** I am just so grateful to all of the builders and contractors that took a chance on me. We have developed some great relationships over the years.

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# Lark Hotel opens new food truck in Downtown Bozeman

## Flavors of Vietnam delivered through the window of an airstream

BY MIRA BRODY

BOZEMAN – It's Thursday evening in downtown Bozeman, and Main Street is bustling with a mixture of tourists and locals snapping photos of the iconic Baxter Hotel sign and grabbing a bite of ice cream before Music on Main begins. Upon walking past the Lark Hotel, a new smell wafts from the shiny airstream bus parked out front, welcoming those looking for something other than a burger and fries to satisfy their cravings. Owned by Lark Hotel, SunDial is Bozeman's newest (stationary) food truck, serving up modern Vietnamese street food made from fresh, local ingredients.

"Vietnamese is going to be bringing the fresh everything," said Heather Marie, head chef for The Lark Hotel and SunDial. "It's going to be bringing the fresh vegetables, not as much grease—the healthy side."

The menu boasts a variety of items for dining on the airstream deck or to-go, including banh mi sandwiches (the gingered beef and onion is Marie's favorite), spring rolls, vermicelli noodle bowls and pho. Pair your meal with sugarcane juice, mint lemonade and homemade SunDial juice: a blend of sugarcane juice, calamansi juice and seltzer water.

Marie is originally from Boise, Idaho, but has been cooking and baking professionally in West Virginia for the last 12 years. A veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps and graduate of the Art Institute of Virginia Beach, she has run an award-winning gourmet cake shop and café, engineered West Virginia's "Hottest Burger" while working at White Horse Tavern, holds a bachelor's degree in culinary management with a minor in pastries and confections, and has dabbled, she says, in almost every cuisine across the globe.

Marie was hired when SunDial was just a concept, and immediately saw the opportunity to move back West. The airstream had its grand opening on Aug. 5 and is the latest offering from The Lark, which opened back in 2015. The menu is not only healthy, but also offers gluten free, vegetarian and vegan options and works with local vendors, such as the Spice and Tea Exchange, which provides an exclusive pickling spice blend.

To add some spice to my people watching, I ordered the banh mi with gingered beef and onion and some SunDial juice. The flavor of beef and savory pickled veggies paired well with the bubbly beverage on a warm,



The SunDial food truck offers fresh, local, Vietnamese street food for sit down or to-go. PHOTO BY MIRA BRODY

thundercloud-strewn evening. The menu is diverse, affordable and different for the area, offering passersby a bite of Vietnam in view of the area's classic art deco buildings and mountainous horizon.

P.S. if you like meat, ask about SunDial's secret menu option.



Chef Heather Marie is SunDial and The Lark's new head chef, moving back West after 12 years on the east coast culinary world. PHOTO BY MIRA BRODY

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## AMUSE-BOUCHE

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

## You know, it's hard out there for a chef



BY SCOTT MECHURA  
EBS FOOD COLUMNIST

While we have all had our frustrations in both the giving and receiving end of service and business interactions this last 18 months, we have also had a pretty darn good reason. The handling of COVID has turned every method of combating a virus we knew upside down.

We have also swept many of these challenges under the kitchen mats, so to speak, choosing to chalk them up to things beyond our control. Much of the last year-and-a-half has absolutely been uncontrollable.

From a restaurant perspective, acquiring product has never been harder. Maintaining supplies we once took for granted—such as chicken, which we have had unlimited access to ever since John W. Tyson first began mass farming them in 1935—suddenly are unavailable for days on end.

Teams of employees have never been harder to assemble and business volume in this valley has never been larger. Some of that volume is tourism, but it is also due to what appears to be a mass exodus from costal cities, which naturally presents certain growing pains.

It is difficult for many business owners to keep the doors of their restaurants open, even when everything is as it should be. Now, lets increase costs of goods and services, dramatically in some cases, limit the people pursuing employment, and increase your patrons to an all-time high.

Talk about writing a recipe for a challenge few can execute.

But here's the thing. Now is the time to shine.

We must all drive forward and give it our all because we can't let the cards 2020 dealt us cause us to fold too soon.

Being someone who tries to seek positives out of negative situations, I can tell you that in recent months I have found some of the best food I have ever found in my almost 22 years as a resident of Gallatin Valley. And I'll give you an example.

Due to the challenges we all face, Follow Yer' Nose Barbeque in Emigrant, MT is only open four days a week, as are most businesses as we know. Because they are so short staffed, when they ARE open, the owner and grandson of a multi award winning pit master, is more hands on than ever. He is closer to his brisket, ribs, sausage and pork than probably since he first opened. And as a former resident and critic of Austin, Texas brisket, Follow Yer' Nose Barbeque could plopp down roots anywhere in the barbeque belt of south-central Texas and instantly gain respect.

I would bet this wouldn't be the case if he weren't as hands on as he is now, quite literally doing everything himself.

There are so many hard working, driven and talented chefs, restauranteurs and leaders in this valley and we need to push through and focus on the joy our teams bring to our guests when we are doing what we love so much.

As one of the hardest people to work for I've ever known once told me: "tough times don't build character, they reveal it."

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

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# American Life In Poetry

BY KWAME DAWES

French American poet, Natalie Handal, has lived in Europe, Latin America and the Arab world since her birth in Haiti, and she offers here a clever and somewhat whimsical self-portrait that flirts with the idea that it is often impossible to presume what is inside of us simply by what our faces offer. "Cara Aceitunada" is Spanish for "olive-colored face".

**Cara Aceitunada**  
BY NATALIE HANDAL

In Granada  
a man asked  
for the birds inside of me

I told him I've never  
belonged to anyone

He asked  
where I was from  
I gave him a list of cities

He said  
the mirrors of history  
confuse history

but in your olive-colored face  
no one can disturb your heart

# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

**ACROSS**

- 1 Prussian spa site
- 4 Verdi opera
- 8 "Dies \_\_\_\_\_"
- 12 Wood (pref.)
- 13 Project
- 14 Male salmon
- 15 Altar constellation
- 16 Fly
- 17 Verb-forming (suf.)
- 18 Counterpart
- 20 Cornbread
- 22 Favor
- 25 Moon of Saturn
- 28 Abominable snowman
- 31 Carplike fish
- 33 Generation
- 34 One (pref.)
- 35 Breed of duck
- 36 Fluidity unit
- 37 Bengal people
- 38 Verily
- 39 Jewish month
- 40 Attest

**DOWN**

- 1 Test
- 2 Ancient city in Asia Minor
- 3 Lath
- 4 Wife of Mohammed
- 5 Artificial language
- 6 Drug Enforcement
- 42 Advise (Scot.)
- 44 Freedman in Kentish law
- 46 Rye disease
- 50 Filament
- 52 Jap. shrub
- 55 Greek letter
- 56 Long-nosed shark
- 57 Amalekite king
- 58 One who is (suf.)
- 59 Sign
- 60 Teem
- 61 Compass direction

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

A	A	M	A	B	A	S	B	A	R	M
C	P	A	C	O	D	A	A	L	A	E
C	R	I	M	I	N	A	L	L	A	S
L	E	D	A	P	A	S	H	A		
L	A	B	I	S	P	E	A	T		
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# Corner Quote



**"I am in love with Montana. For other states I have admiration, respect, recognition, even some affection, but with Montana it is love, and it's difficult to analyze love when you're in it."**

**-John Steinbeck,  
"Travels with Charley"**

# BIG SKY BEATS

## Rain Dance

BY JULIA BARTON

Growing up in Montana, my dad would always say "If you don't like the weather, wait five minutes," referencing short afternoon rain showers that aren't atypical of summer afternoons in the Rockies. Well, it feels like I've spent much more time waiting for storms than dancing in the rain lately, so here is a playlist that's good for wishing for rain, and dancing in it when it finally arrives.



1. "The Adventures of Rain Dance Maggie" by Red Hot Chili Peppers
2. "Float On" by Modest Mouse
3. "Boardwalks - Sonny Alven Remix" by Little May
4. "It Never Rains" by Ponderosa Grove
5. "Africa" by TOTO
6. "Rhythm of the Rain" by The Cascades
7. "Lake Missoula" by Richy Mitch & The Coal Miners
8. "I Think I Like When It Rains" by WILLIS
9. "Laps Around The Sun" by Ziggy Alberts
10. "Earth to God" by COIN

# BACK40

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”



Zach Altman, Anthony Pavkovich, Kim Roush and David Laufenberg flee a thunderstorm high on the Beaten Path trail in the Beartooth Mountains. PHOTO BY SETH LANGBAUER.

## Our Common Ground

### A running traverse of the Greater Yellowstone puts a spotlight on threats to public lands

BY ANTHONY PAVKOVICH

Surrounded by friends, I closed my front door on July 10, 2017, laced up my lugged shoes, and jogged away from my home in Bozeman, south toward the Gallatin Range, Yellowstone National Park, and eventually 200 more miles to Red Lodge, Montana: an immense swath of the 20-million-acre Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Over the course of seven days, I redefined my relationship with the land over high alpine peaks, across vast sagebrush plains, and along countless free-flowing rivers through one of the few intact, wild places left in the Lower 48.

Traveling beside me were two of my closest friends. Zach Altman, the race director for Bozeman Running Company and a passionate trail philosopher, once said, “I define home to be the places you can reach on foot from your front door.” I invited him along for his humor, deep thought and unwillingness to turn down an adventure. After seven days on the trail, our homes would be a whole lot bigger.

Matching us stride for stride was David Laufenberg, an ecology graduate student at Montana State University and an old friend from the University of Wisconsin. A former educator with the Yellowstone Association, Dave brought tremendous knowledge and wonderfully complex stories about the country we traveled through. During our years of friendship, we had crisscrossed this ecosystem, but this was the first time we embarked on an adventure of this scale.

Stepping back nearly half a year, to the end of January 2017, this trip materialized on the steps of the State Capitol in Helena. Accompanied by more than 1,000 other Montanans, we crammed into the chambers of

the Capitol to rally against the sale or transfer of our public lands. The floor and balconies of the rotunda overflowed with citizens representing a variety of user groups: hunters, anglers, hikers, climbers, trail runners and motorized users. Echoing through these stone halls was the thunderous chant, “This land is our land.”

Federal and state legislators continue to work with unprecedented zeal to transfer public lands and resources to private interests, with lobbyists from extractive industries leading the charge. To stop this sell-off, the public must find its voice and engage; call our representatives, participate in planning and actively vote. If not, fragmentation and destruction of our wild landscapes, through urban growth, energy extraction and hard rock mining, will continue.

Searching for a way to turn our anger into action, we left the Capitol and ran through the city to the top of Mount Helena. While pausing and reflecting on the summit, Dave reinforced the idea that our public land “goes away if we don’t protect it; if we don’t show support for it; if we don’t celebrate it.”

Jogging south from our city, we left behind the shrinking farm fields and proliferating second homes, and entered the Gallatin Range. This roadless core of snow-capped peaks and high ridgelines is the last major mountain range, bordering Yellowstone National Park, without permanent wilderness protection. Inspiring the public lands rally, legislation originating from the Montana House of Representatives proposed to strip this range—and many others throughout the state—of its wilderness study status.

It was fitting that our run would start here, as this single event inspired our journey.

As we headed further south into this vulnerable mountain range, the words of Governor Steve Bullock that echoed through the Capitol halls still rang in my ears: “These lands are our heritage!”

What a spectacular heritage it is. Chasing the rising sun up the snowfields of Hyalite Peak, we basked in the early morning light on the summit. Gazing south, the magnificent crest of the Gallatin Range swept toward Yellowstone. This rugged range is uncrossed by roads while still home to wandering grizzly bears, herds of mountain goats and elusive wolverines. From this highpoint, we would run nearly 40 more miles along the spine of the range before dropping into the remote and wild north end of Yellowstone National Park.

Along the border of Yellowstone, this ecosystem is threatened by mining, drilling, logging and rapid urbanization spiraling out from Bozeman, Jackson, Wyoming, and Idaho’s Teton Valley. As increasing pressure is placed on the landscape by the needs of a booming population, we must consider what compromises we are willing to take to protect this wild ecosystem.

The challenge in today’s polarized political atmosphere is to actively listen and engage with our friends, neighbors and decision makers. While recovering from our run we sat down with Darcie Warden, the Montana conservation coordinator at the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, and she eloquently shared this vision.

“We need to connect with people that are different than us, who think differently than us, who make a living differently than us, and understand them in a meaningful way,” Warden said.

As the Gallatin Valley continues to grow at one of the fastest rates in the country, we have to prioritize and plan ahead. Gallatin County is now inhabited by nearly 105,000 residents; nearly one in 10 Montanans live here. Using the Census Bureau’s conservatively estimated growth rate of 3 percent, the county’s population will double in less than 25 years.

Finishing each day on the trail, we were joined by many of these residents. Day after long day, friends, neighbors and coworkers had our tents set up and a meal waiting, while engaging in meaningful discussions about the future of our backyards. Reclining with warm food and a cold beer, the conversations around me inspired gratitude for the people who share my home. They all hold a common belief: this wild land deserves protecting, and it takes a determined community to do the work.

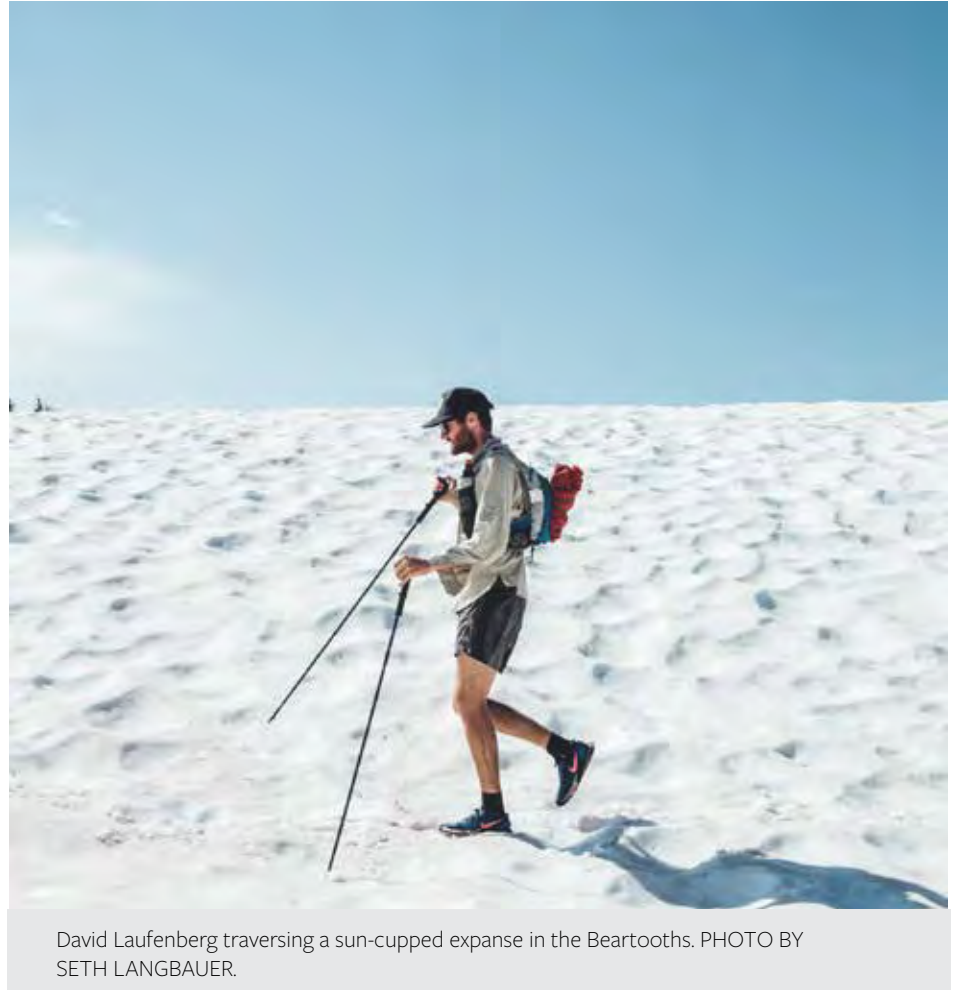
A great debt is owed to Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot and Montana’s former U.S. Senator Lee Metcalf for setting aside the wild spaces of the Greater Yellowstone. However, not one single acre of Montana has been designated wilderness since the establishment of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness in 1983. While less than 4 percent of Montana is wilderness, we are continually challenged to add to this legacy.



Zach Altman and Pavkovich (at right) contemplating the distance ahead. PHOTO BY SETH LANGBAUER.

Leaving camp well before sunrise, we’d be on trail for 12-plus hours each day. Often, at the edge of exhaustion, moments of awe would sweep over me. The alpenglow on a distant peak, the sound of moving water, or the dew glistening on a ripe huckleberry repeatedly conjured deep feelings of appreciation for the landscape we collectively share.

Crossing the Gallatins, Yellowstone National Park, and the Beartooth Plateau left me stripped, broken and vulnerable. On tender and tired feet, I staggered past the Forest Service boundary and down the road into Red



David Laufenberg traversing a sun-cupped expanse in the Beartooths. PHOTO BY SETH LANGBAUER.

Lodge. Leaving our public lands behind, we were welcomed by the arms of friends and surrounded by the team that selflessly helped us achieve our dream. During our seven days on the trail, there were nearly 40 friends and acquaintances that helped us cover these miles.

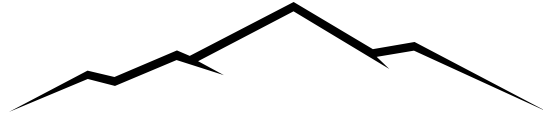
After the trip, we met with John Todd, conservation director for the Montana Wilderness Association, to share our experiences and observations from the trail and within our community. He shared our consensus: that we don’t have to agree on everything. But, here’s this big chunk of what we think is important that we can advocate for together, for each other, and we can be better because of it. That’s where the important work happens—when you turn those people into friends and allies.

While drinking beers with Zach on my front porch back in Bozeman, he summed up the value of our trip. “Virtually every mile we ran on that trip was [on] public land,” he said. “And, I think, the run itself and the amount of people it took for that to succeed is a good metaphor for how we need to come together on public lands issues and see to it that these lands continue to exist.”

Our public lands will continue to come under threat. There are dangerous mines proposed along Yellowstone’s border, potentially devastating deregulation to our environmental protections undertaken by this presidential administration, and rapid urbanization on the landscape.

We need to collaborate, speak up, and encourage accountability and action, to keep the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, our remarkable common ground, wild and public.

*A version of this story was first published in the Summer 2020 edition of Mountain Outlaw magazine.*



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skiing and more...*



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