

Ambrose Memorial Lecture: Corrie Williamson

Poet, naturalist, and teacher Corrie Williamson gave the annual Ambrose Memorial Lecture on December 3, 2025, with the title "Revery Will Do: Imagination and Conservation on Montana's Great Plains." Foundation Board Member Kay Satre opened the evening with a warm welcome to the full room of attendees. She highlighted the "joy of lifelong learning" that public libraries bring to communities and thanked all for being there.

Stephenie Ambrose Tubbs then introduced Williamson, noting their mutual connection to the Lewis and Clark Historic Trail, writing and poetry, and the organization she helped found and where Williamson works: American Prairie.

Williamson started her lecture with a poem about the prairie by former Montana poet laureate Tami Haaland. She talked about traveling to Montana from her Virginia hometown where William Clark's first wife, Julia Hancock also lived. She shared her similar connections to the landscape of the Corps of Discovery and read from her own and other poets' collections. And, she shared important literary touchpoints about the vital relationship between wildlife and human beings, including in Ellen Meloy's *Eating Stone*.

On the intersection of poetry, landscape, and conservation she said, "It's not surprising that I turned to conservation and wild landscapes as an extension of deep imagining."

Williamson described the origin of American Prairie, a nonprofit located in central Montana with a mission to connect, protect, and share 3.2 million acres of Montana's grasslands. She told stories about the abundance of wild species (bison, swift fox, sage grouse, prairie dogs, and many birds) and collaborating with local tribal partners to research and protect them. She concluded her talk with an invitation to visit American Prairie.

To watch the recording, please visit <https://www.lclibfoundation.org/stephen-ambrose-memorial-lecture>.



To make a prairie it takes
a clover and a bee,
One clover and a bee,
And revery,
The revery alone will do,
If bees are few.
— Emily Dickinson

Celebrating a Writer's Journey: Matt Pavelich

The Lewis & Clark Library Foundation and dozens of friends, family, and community members came together on February 21, 2026, to celebrate the writing journey of Matt Pavelich, a Montana writer based in Hot Springs. The latest of his seven books, published in 2025, were

The Harrows: A Novel of the American Century and *Tell all the truth but tell it slant*, a collection of short stories.

Pavelich was joined by his son Nick and daughter Riley who read favorite excerpts from his stories and asked poignant questions about their father's writing life, how he comes up with his varied characters, his need for solitude to write, and the stylistic aspects of his work.

Pavelich said he always wanted to write from a young age, but was critical of his early work. His first book was published in his thirties. He said that everything he's done has led to this point, to becoming a better writer. Even his work as a defense lawyer and



judge provided inspiration for his novels and short stories.

When asked why music and musicians appear in many of his stories, he said "music and poetry and prose are systems that involve sounds moving in time. One of

the things a writer has to work with is pace and rhythm and these things do a great deal to inform or move a story."

On resonating with readers, Pavelich said "When a reader connects with a writer and imagination sparks on both sides, I don't think there's a greater act of empathy anywhere."

In closing, he expressed his "debt to Helena" owing to treasured experiences and lifelong friendships that have endured for many years. This Saturday afternoon event was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended.

To watch the recording of this Writer's Journey event, please visit <https://www.helenacivictv.org/on-demand/6833>.



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The Lewis & Clark Library Foundation was established in 1978 to support Lewis & Clark Library beyond what tax monies can provide. In these times of increasing demand for information in all formats, private support is critical to maintaining excellent library services. It is the goal of the Foundation Board of Directors, through the caring and generosity of like-minded citizens, to maintain long-term financial support for our county-wide public library system.

The Lewis & Clark Library Foundation is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization.

Our Library and its Librarians! Simply magical!

By Nikolas Griffith, Board President



"Silence. Books must be returned no later than the last date shown. The nature of causality must not be interfered with." Those are the rules for the "Library Space," author Terry Pratchett's mystical dimension that connects all libraries. While Pratchett's "L-Space" is a novel creation and Lewis & Clark Library workers look slightly different than the wand-waving and pointy hats of Pratchett's librarians, the results are no less magical.

The witches and wizards who turn Foundation donors' support into educational programs, spaces for civic engagement, and tools for learning and development are the staff and leadership of each branch of Lewis & Clark Library in Helena, East Helena, Augusta, and Lincoln along with our Mobile Library. Their time and expertise keep our library system growing to meet the needs of the communities served.

- Resources and interactive programs for new parents and their kids? **Magical!**
- Accessible computers and reliable WiFi? **Marvelous!**
- Free spaces in which to teach, learn, and meet with others? **Wonderful!**
- Opportunities to meet and hear from artists, writers, and community leaders for free? **Nothing short of fantastic!**

Soon residents across Lewis and Clark County will be served by the latest addition to the library fleet, the Library's new Mobile Library, and we couldn't be more pleased that Foundation donors and a grantor helped make this possible.

In early May, donors also showed their generosity and love of our Library through Greater Helena Gives, which this year came just a few dollars shy of our \$5,000 goal to help fund the annual Library Wish List enhancements.

It's a humbling honor to serve as president of our all-volunteer board (staffed by Patti Borneman and supported by Library Director John Finn and his staff) and an inspiring one. Because of the support of this community and donors like you, the Lewis & Clark Library family keeps making life magical for us all.

**MONTANANS
FOR
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*Your Library
Matters!*

The Lewis & Clark Library Foundation has partnered with Montanans for Libraries, a campaign launched by the Montana Library Association and the Trust for Montana Libraries to raise awareness and support for the public libraries across our state. Our friend and colleague, Bruce Newell writes a monthly blog called **Your Library Matters** published on their website (www.mtlibrarytrust.org). We encourage anyone who loves libraries to visit montanansforlibraries.org/blog to read Bruce's thought-provoking essays. There you can also sign up for the Montanans for Libraries newsletter and stay connected to their mission.

A new Mobile Library on the way and new East Helena Library to come

By John Finn, Director, Lewis & Clark Library



As the Library prepares for approval of its final Budget for Fiscal Year 2027, I remain thankful for the Library Foundation and its ongoing support of the Library's mission. The updated Library Mission Statement was approved by the Board of Trustees in October of 2025, and reads:

The mission of the Lewis & Clark Library is to provide welcoming spaces and enriching experiences that inspire, connect, and strengthen individuals and community while promoting lifelong exploration without barriers.

In May, the Lewis & Clark Library Foundation showed their ongoing support for the Library's mission and approved \$85,000 for the annual Library Wish List. Staff will request funds to improve and enhance spaces at all locations with new furnishings, including seating and play installations. We aim to make the libraries more welcoming, comfortable, and full of enriching experiences.

The remainder of the Wish List funding will cover everything from books and downloadable eBooks and audiobooks to subscription services such as New York Times Online and Kanopy digital film streaming.

As I write this letter, I've received the exciting news that our new Mobile Library (our new name for the bookmobile) is almost ready to roll off the assembly line in Wakarusa, Indiana. It will begin the long drive to Helena soon and we anticipate that it will be sitting in our garage by the middle of June.

This major purchase has been made possible by the generous gift of more than \$250,000 from the Foundation, covering half of the final cost. Read more about the new Mobile Library in the article by Bretagne Brumm, our Outreach and Mobile Library Librarian (page 5).

Conceptual designs for the East Helena Branch Library.
Courtesy: Mosaic Architecture.



Finally, the Library is very excited about the progress we are making on a new Library facility in East Helena. Since this time last year, we have secured a plot of land in JFK Park in the central part of East Helena, close to schools, the municipal pool, and the walking trails along Prickly Pear Creek. Mosaic Architecture won the bid to design the new building and a capital campaign to raise awareness and needed funds has been launched. Read more about the Capital Campaign on page 7 of this *Mid-Year in Review* newsletter.

Besides the funding, the most important thing that the Foundation provides to library staff is moral support. Staff know that the Foundation board and donors have our backs. If things do go squirrely, we know that there is a whole community of folks who love what we do and will be willing to fight by our side.

The Lewis & Clark Library Foundation remains the most supportive organization that this library team could imagine.

Thank you for all you do for Lewis & Clark Library. We appreciate your support.



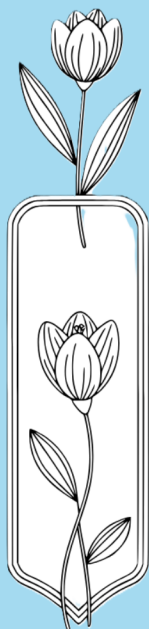
Mosaic Architecture's initial design for the new East Helena branch library is intended to complement the natural landscape of JFK Park and Prickly Pear Creek. The color and texture of the building materials reflect the smelting history of East Helena. As an anchor in the park, it will bring a much needed community resource into the neighborhood.



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Thank you for supporting our beloved library!

When you give a donation to the Lewis & Clark Library Foundation, you may name a person to be remembered or honored with your gift. You can also honor a group, organization, or business as a tribute. If you wish, we will send an acknowledgement of your gift and will also list those who are honored or memorialized in our Mid-Year in Review newsletter each spring.

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As always, a special thank you to these supporting organizations over the years:

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Our New Mobile Library is on the Way!

By Bretagne Brumm, Outreach Librarian

As we look ahead to 2026, we are thrilled to announce the arrival of our brand-new hybrid Mobile Library, an exciting investment in literacy, learning, and community connection for years to come.

Designed to build on the success of our current vehicle, the new Mobile Library will feature all the beloved services our patrons already enjoy, while introducing several important upgrades to better serve our growing community. The hybrid model offers improved fuel efficiency and a reduced environmental impact, helping us deliver library services in a more sustainable and cost-effective way.

The upgraded vehicle will include two patron access doors for smoother entry and accessibility, along with two fully equipped service desks that will allow staff to assist more visitors at once. The exterior graphics celebrate the charm of small towns throughout Lewis and Clark County and feature adorable animal artwork that reflects the spirit and beauty of our region. These eye-catching graphics will also appear on special limited-edition mobile library cards available to new library users while supplies last.

To celebrate this exciting addition, the public is invited to a welcoming party on Tuesday, June 16, from 5:00 to 7:00 pm. The evening will include live music, community festivities, and even a special rocky road ice cream treat for guests to enjoy.

This new Mobile Library represents far more than a vehicle; it is a commitment to expanding opportunity, encouraging lifelong learning, and bringing library services directly to every corner of our community.



2026 Helena Reads Poetry!



L-R top row: Leo Schuman, Michael Pendergist, Jonathon Ambarian, Cathy Dombrowske, Delaney Lynch, Callie Aschim, Nick Radley

Bottom row: Aria Fihre, Marisa Diaz-Waian, Mitch Carroll

The 15th Annual **Helena Reads Poetry!** was April 28, 2026, and attendees filled just about every seat in the Large Community Room. We wholeheartedly thank this year's community poetry readers for a truly memorable and meaningful evening listening to poems that resonated in a personal way, held a special meaning, or honored or conveyed a precious memory or experience. And a special thanks to the incomparable **Virginia Reeves** for introducing each reader with grace and encouragement.

- Montana Television Network Senior Political Reporter **Jonathon Ambarian** read "Clancy of the Overflow" by Banjo Paterson.
- Helena Area Chamber of Commerce CEO/President **Callie Aschim** read "Listen to the Mustn'ts" by Shel Silverstein in honor of her sister, Katie Aschim.
- New Foundation Board Member **Mitch Carroll** read an untitled poem in its original Spanish and then in in English from Pablo Neruda's collection *Veinte Poemas de Amor y una Canción Desesperada*.
- Merlin CCC Executive Director **Marisa Diaz-Waian** read a prose piece of her own titled "Seasonal Cleanings."
- Augusta writer **Cathy Dombrovke** read two poems of her own: "Its Justification" and "Evensong" from a small book entitled *Poems of Spirit and Place*.
- Helena College student **Aria Fihre** read an original poem called "The Train at Half Past Twelve."
- Capital High Senior **Delaney Lynch** read "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost.
- Project for Alternative Learning Junior **Michael Pendergist** read "Daddy" by Sylvia Plath.
- Central Elementary School (and new Helena Middle School) Principal **Nick Radley** read "IF" by Rudyard Kipling.
- Writer/Memoirist **Leo Marcel Schuman** read selections from "The Calamus Cycle," taken from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*.

Watch the recording of this year's Helena Reads Poetry! on the Helena Civic TV website: <https://www.helenacivictv.org/on-demand/7001>

Welcome our New Board Members!



MITCH CARROLL

Joyce's Stephen Dedalus says that an artist's mistakes are volitional and are portals of discovery. Mitch Carroll has always felt the same way about books and libraries, and, indeed, the Lewis and Clark Library was a gateway to a new world for him as a child. As an example, it was the very first place he ever accessed the World Wide Web.

Mitch Carroll is a Western Montana kid—born in Butte to Anaconda stock, he grew up in Jefferson County, graduated from the University of Montana-Missoula, and has been in Helena with his wife Lindsey since 2010. After a decade of fundraising work with nonprofits and a handful of years as a craft baker, Mitch is proud to currently be a part of Montana's great "liquid bread" culture as the Assistant Taproom Manager at Blackfoot River Brewing Company.

Outside the taproom, Mitch's interests include hikes on Helena's trails with his and Lindsey's Boykin Spaniel; the phenology of local wildflowers; Latin American, Irish and Australian literatures; Tai Chi; Chinese tea; bridge; baking and weekend getaways with Lindsey.

MARGARET CORCORAN



Margaret Corcoran was, until 2017, chef and owner of Benny's Bistro, a downtown Helena restaurant known for locally grown produce and Montana-raised meats. Before Benny's, Corcoran made French-style pastries and desserts at the Pasta Pantry, which led to today's Park Avenue Bakery. Twenty years after Benny's opened in 1994, she was named the 2015 Business Woman of the Year. Upon receiving this honor, the Independent Record wrote, "Throughout her career Margaret said she's learned to not sweat the small problems and to give as much as the restaurant can to the community."

Alongside her work as a business owner, Corcoran served on the boards of the YMCA, Helena Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Helena Area Community Foundation.

Born and raised in western Montana, Margaret attended Carroll College and the University of Montana where she earned an interdisciplinary Master's degree in Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Classical Languages.

East Helena Library Capital Campaign

By Mitch Carroll, Co-Chair, Fundraising & Communications Committee and East Helena Library Capital Campaign

Lewis & Clark Library's free services and programs bring countless opportunities for growth, learning, exploration, and more throughout Lewis and Clark County, and East Helena is no exception. Library Director Finn recently shared that in 2025 the East Helena branch welcomed 14,114 patrons, 3,596 people attended 92 programs, and 156 library cards were issued to new patrons.

As this community continues to grow, so too does the need for library services. As such, we are excited to share (along with John Finn's update) that planning is underway for a new 11,000-square-foot building to house the East Helena branch. Expected to open in 2029, it will be located adjacent to JFK Park. Not only will this project help to expand and diversify the East Helena branch's collection, programs and technology, but it will also include a large, 120-person community gathering space.

This project will be funded largely by private donations and grants (with no increase in taxes) and its footprint is above the flood plain, situated next to the park and pool, and right where the current, unused tennis court sits. The new library will not impact the Prickly Pear trail system. Current designs show the library will complement existing park resources, including a much-needed parking lot upgrade.

To learn more about the East Helena Library Capital Campaign, contact us at info@lclibfoundation.org. We welcome your involvement, ideas, and support!

COME SEE US IN EAST HELENA THIS SUMMER!

Pick up a fact sheet and learn about the planned new branch building when you visit the Foundation booth at the **East Helena Food Truck Festival** on June 11, July 9, and August 13 on Main Street. We'll be there!



LEWIS & CLARK LIBRARY
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120 S. Last Chance Gulch, Helena, MT 59601

Making a great library even better!

Save the Date!

Ambrose Memorial Lecture

September 29, 2026 ~ 6:30 pm

Montana Heritage Center, Helena



Nate Schweber

Lecture Theme:

“Montana's greatest crusader journalist: Joseph Kinsey Howard, author of *Montana: High, Wide & Handsome*”

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