



## YEAR IN REVIEW

### 13th Annual Stephen Ambrose Memorial Lecture



Helena's Marga Lincoln presents lecture on four of the ten unsung heroes featured in her new book, *Montana Grit*

On Friday, November 3rd, the 2023 Stephen Ambrose Memorial Lecture presented Helena-area journalist and writer, Marga Lincoln, author of *Montana Grit: Ten Unsung Heroes Who Dared to Make a Difference*, published by Farcountry Press this year.

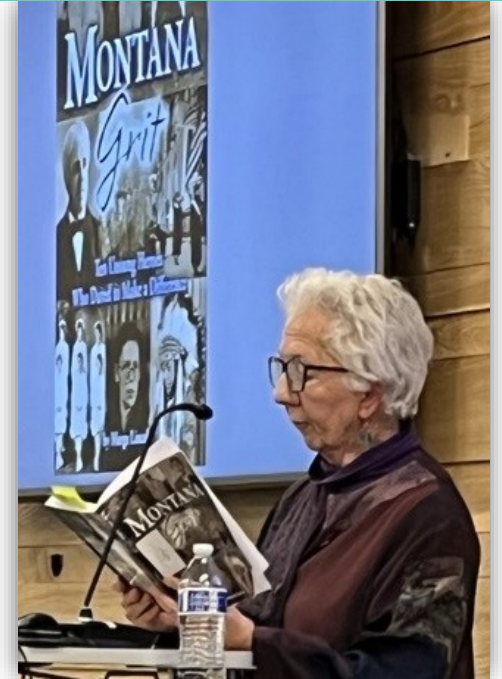
The large community room at Lewis & Clark Library was full to capacity with interested and engaged attendees. During her talk, Lincoln highlighted four of the ten heroes chronicled in her book.

- Judge Charles L. Crum of Forsyth defended the Constitution to counter anti-German paranoia and hysteria during WWI.
- African-American nurse Octavia Bridgwater of Helena worked for decades to fight racial discrimination.
- Suffragette Hazel Hunkins of Billings was jailed for—and then 60 years later rewarded for—fighting for a woman's right to vote.
- Accountant Elouise Cobell persisted for more than 13 years before succeeding in her suit against the U.S. government for mismanaging billions of dollars in natural resource royalties owed to the Blackfoot Tribe.

Lincoln spent five years researching these and six other "ordinary" Montanans who, she writes, "are heroes because their choices and actions required courage, and they toiled not just for themselves but for the good of all."

Lincoln answered thoughtful questions from attendees and received a standing ovation at the end of her lecture. Many in the Helena area consider her a modern-day hero for the dozens of stories she wrote about artists, musicians, writers, and others throughout Montana during her career in journalism. It's not surprising that she felt compelled to bring these strong and inspiring historical Montanans into the limelight, just as she has done with modern-day Montanans.

Our thanks to all who came to hear Lincoln's inspiring and memorable lecture. A wonderful evening was had by all!



Our Ambrose lecturer with Foundation board members, from left: Bruce Whittenberg, Bethany Flint, John Finn, Bonnie Bowler, Wendy Wheeler, and Virginia Reeves. Marga Lincoln, center. Attending the event, but not pictured, were Sue Jackson, Lorna Milne, and Opal Winebrenner.

# Library Director's Note



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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The Lewis & Clark Library Foundation is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization.  
Tax ID# 81-0419768



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 & generosity of like-minded citizens, to maintain long-term financial support for our county-wide public library system.



By John Finn, Lewis & Clark Library Director & Foundation Board Secretary

Change and growth are again leading to big expectations at Lewis & Clark Library. The Library just published a new Five-Year Strategic Plan. The Plan will guide us towards new facilities in East Helena and possibly the North Valley, as well as a new replacement Bookmobile (more to come on that in the coming year). We are working hard to make good things happen for current and potential patrons in Lewis and Clark County.

At the Helena Library, we spent a full summer with the good folks from Grateful Bread Bakery. Their coffee shop has been open in the lobby since May and we have developed a wonderful partnership. They have plans to open on Saturdays very soon. This winter you can come to the library and sit and enjoy a hot coffee and a breakfast pastry.

The Library Foundation made it possible to enjoy our first full Staff Day since COVID. We closed the Library on August 25 and spent the morning learning about teamwork, avoiding harassment, and how to operate a fire extinguisher! In the afternoon we had a wonderful picnic and enjoyed each other's company while playing a series of fun table games. That was just one of the many Wish List items provided to the Library by the Foundation.

The Wish List is just what it is: library enhancements and staff support we wish to have at the Library, but can only acquire through the generosity of donors giving to the Library Foundation. Read more on the next page about the most recent Wish List items made possible by your support. While tax dollars keep the lights on and doors open and pay staff salaries, these wonderful enhancements are in place because our community values and cares about the Library.

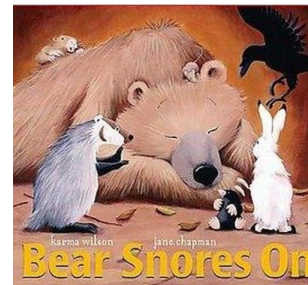
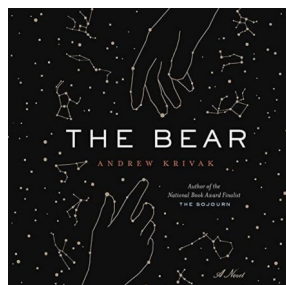
As always, the Library Team and I would like to thank the Foundation and its donors. The Foundation helps to bring inspiration to our work. We dream and the Foundation makes those dreams come true.



In the 16 years that Lewis & Clark Library has won an NEA grant to put on a community-wide Big Read event, giving away thousands of books, and sponsoring dozens of exciting and inspiring events, the Foundation has quietly made its own contribution to supplement the NEA Big Read grant. Whether it's helping with kickoff events, artist receptions, advertising and promotion, speaker

fees, or the purchase of books to give away, the Foundation has been honored to partially, but essentially, support this beloved Library program each fall.

This year, while adults were reading *The Bear*, the Foundation made it possible for free Companion Read books, shown below, for preschool up to middle school readers.



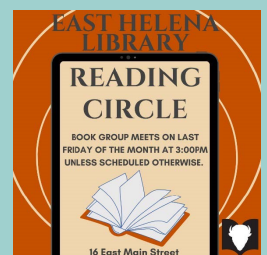
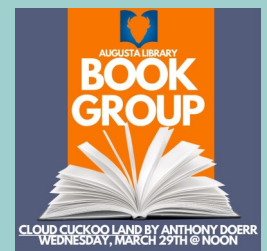
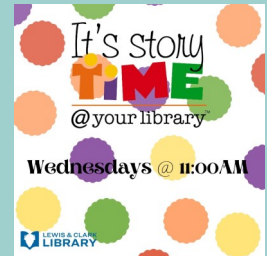


# Library Wish List—2024

The **Library Wish List for FY 2024** was presented to the Foundation Board at our October board meeting. The following enhancements will augment the already great services, community spaces, creative activities, and educational resources our libraries provide, but make them just a little bit better with a little extra funding. Books will always be the foundation of our Library’s purpose, but there is so much more that libraries now give, for free, to help our communities thrive. Foundation donors make all this possible for Lewis and Clark County residents of all ages. **THANK YOU!**



• Augusta: after-school club, Storytime, Book Club, mobile hotspots	\$ 2,000
• East Helena: book giveaways, Reading Circle books, teen personal pantry	\$ 1,000
• Lincoln: book giveaways, Book Club books, adult painting kits	\$ 2,000
• Helena Main: book giveaways via Bookmobile at area high schools	\$ 2,500
• Helena Main: program to foster staff morale & reduce turnover	\$ 2,500
• Children’s Program: Beanstack, early literacy kits, caregiver packs, sensory bag	\$ 9,500
• Teen Program: restock PAL book vending machine, after-hours dance party at the Library, summer program, 100 Books Before Graduation	\$ 3,370
• Bookmobile: book giveaways at area schools and county-wide outreach	\$ 6,000
• Collections: Library of Things, board games, and other new items	\$ 1,000
• Public Program: special author visits	\$ 12,000
• Public Program: 2024 NEA Big Read advertising and promotion	\$ 5,750
• Library Human Resources: staff wellness initiatives	\$ 2,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 50,000</b>



In 2019 the Library Foundation fulfilled a Library Wish List request to install a book vending machine at the Project for Alternative Learning (PAL) high school. The Foundation keeps the vending machine restocked with books that students are motivated to earn and own.



The Bookmobile travels all over Lewis and Clark County, visiting nursing homes, retirement communities, Hutterite colonies, Helena valley locations, and our branch libraries in Augusta, East Helena, and Lincoln. In the summer, the Bookmobile takes storytime outside and brings patrons together to learn about the library while enjoying a good story.



# LEGACY DONORS FY 2019 - 2023



Listed on the next two pages are Lewis & Clark Library Foundation donors who, over the past five years, have contributed one or more gifts. We are grateful for the positive impact of our donors' generosity. Thank you!

**We appreciate the enduring legacy of gifts from:**

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- |                                |                                     |                                 |                                    |
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**Visit our Guidestar/Candid profile at [guidestar.org/Profile/81-0419768](https://www.guidestar.org/Profile/81-0419768).**

Readers: \$500 – \$999

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Dr. Martin Coonen		Taffy Miller		

Illustrators: \$5 – \$499

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## Opal Winebrenner (Board Member 2018-2023)



Opal Winebrenner joined the Foundation Board in 2018 and became president in 2022. It was time to update the Foundation's Strategic Plan and Opal was the ideal person to lead the effort. Following the revised Strategic Plan, she worked with the Board Policy and Practice Committee to develop clear board governance guidelines to help board members understand and carry out their important work.

Opal also ensured that incoming board members would feel welcome and have the benefit of a detailed orientation and opportunity to actively serve on the Foundation's committees.

The Lewis & Clark Library Foundation has come a long way since its inception in 1978. Opal's leadership and skillful management have already helped the organization move forward to support Lewis & Clark Library long into the future.

*Thank you, Opal, for your dedication and service to the Lewis & Clark Library Foundation.*

In 2018, the Lewis & Clark Library was celebrating its 150th anniversary as Montana's oldest library when my term on the Library Foundation Board began. In the next six years, the Library experienced the best of times with its beautiful remodel and the worst of times with the unfortunate COVID pandemic. Throughout these challenging years, our many Library Foundation donors both continued and increased their generosity and unwavering support to ensure the Helena Library and its branches could meet their mission.

Being a member of the Board brings the opportunity to engage with a diverse and dedicated group. Each member serves in different ways depending on their accomplished backgrounds, and brings unique perspectives on how to best ensure the Foundation's donated funds are used most responsibly.

Among many highlights of serving on the Board is the Library staff's annual "Wish List" presentation of their creative proposals to use Foundation funds to enhance the library programs and activities. At Board meetings, members have the opportunity to meet many of the talented Helena Library staff when they make presentations about their specific programs. With gratitude, the staff inform us specifically about how the Foundation funding has supported their efforts. We also learn about Library Director John Finn's most sincere dedication and continual efforts to improve the Library and branches and to support their excellent staff.

Annually, the Board makes a "road trip" site visit to one of the three branch libraries to both show support for these dedicated librarians and to learn about their specific library's services. These branch librarians work alone or with one assistant and are an integral part of their communities, providing myriad library programs for all age groups. The Board also makes a "site visit" to the Bookmobile and "Words on Wheels" Book Bike to meet with their enthusiastic staff who travel throughout Lewis and Clark County.

The Board sponsors its own events including the annual Helena Reads Poetry! event, the Stephen Ambrose Memorial Lecture, and Celebrating a Writer's Journey interviews with authors. Aside from being entertaining and insightful experiences, these events provide exposure for local writers while showcasing the beautifully redesigned Library meeting rooms.

The "time flies by" cliché is appropriate here as my service on the Board has flown by. It has been gratifying to work with talented Board members, our dedicated Board Executive Assistant Patti Borneman, the excellent Library staff, and the indefatigable Library Director John Finn. And to all the people who choose to donate to the Library Foundation, please always know your money is so very much appreciated and well spent. As all Board members do, I very much appreciate having had the privilege to personally support the Foundation's mission in "making a great library even better." Again, to all donors and others who support this mission now and in the future, thank you so very much!



Visiting the Lincoln Branch Library in August 2023. L-R: John Finn, Nikolas Griffith, Lincoln Librarian Eleanor Pierce, Pad McCracken, Wendy Wheeler, Nikki DesRosier, Sue Jackson, Lorna Milne, Bruce Whittenberg, Opal Winebrenner, Taffy Miller, Virginia Reeves, and Bethany Flint.

# Member Reflections

## Taffy Miller (Board Member 2021-2023)

I grew up in a small town in Northwest Montana where a visit by the bookmobile was a highly anticipated event. Even after almost 60 years, when I step into our local bookmobile the smell of books takes me back to those joyous days; my discovery of exploring the world through reading and the beginning of a life-long love of books.

I was thrilled and honored to be asked to serve on the Board three years ago. Learning the responsibilities and challenges of the board and working on solutions and innovations with this dedicated group has been a gratifying experience. In the care of people who value an open, informed mind, and a welcoming atmosphere, our public library will always remain a bright star in this difficult and oftentimes disheartening world.

As I step down from the board, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to learn and grow. Many thanks to all for sharing this common goal of a thriving and enduring public library.



Taffy Miller joined the Foundation in 2021, smack in the middle of the COVID pandemic, when we were meeting via Zoom and not interacting as much in person. Much of our work focused on supporting Library staff who were endeavoring to meet the needs of patrons amidst the closures and restrictions.

Taffy always asked helpful questions and participated in meaningful ways. She actively served on the Board Policy and Practice Committee and the Events Planning Committee.

Last April, on National Library Workers Day (part of the National Library Week celebration) the Board wanted to do something special for Lewis and Clark County's library workers. Taffy reached out to her niece, Freda Wilkinson of Big Sky Brokers, who generously donated free lunches from RockStarr BBQ.

*Thank you, Taffy, for your valuable service on the Foundation Board!*

## Foundation Funds in Review

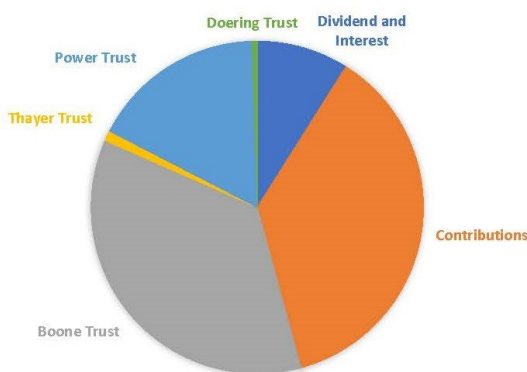
During FY 2023, the Foundation Board took on the task of improving, clarifying, and restructuring the organization's finances. Due to the diligent work of our Treasurer, Pad McCracken, and the Foundation's Budget and Asset Management Committee, our accounts and investments will cost less to manage and earn more. With the complex mix of trust income, money market and CD investments, and an "endowment" fund we will now refer to as our "sustainability" fund, the Foundation can better explain to board members and donors how funds are managed and invested. Our expense reports are much improved as well, showing that the lion's share of Foundation spending is meeting our goal to make our great Lewis & Clark Library even better!

In a nutshell, at the end of FY 2023 (June 30, 2023) the Foundation's total assets were \$1,120,749. Our D.A. Davidson Endowment/Sustainability Fund held \$762,693. Just over \$200,000 is held in what is now called the Special Projects Account almost entirely in high-interest-bearing CDs in order to keep money more readily available to support larger Library needs. At the end of FY 2023, there was a total of \$158,056 in cash accounts.

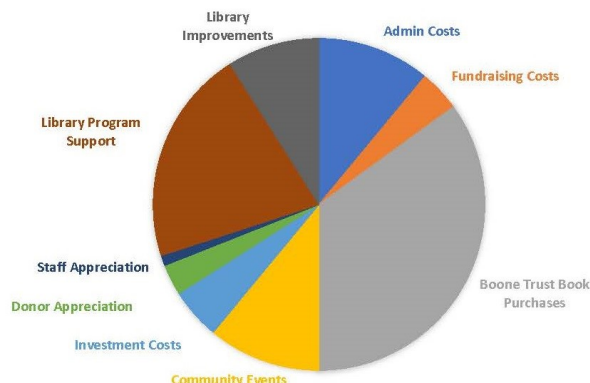
We are pleased to report that \$66,099 was received in unrestricted charitable contributions from generous donors during FY 2023. And a total of \$97,261 came from our valued trusts (see breakdown below).

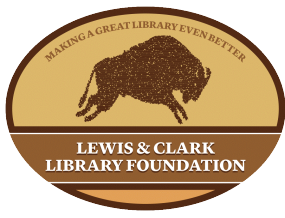
Foundation expenditures totaled \$192,014 in FY 2023, following a budget that allowed up to \$195,400 in expenditures. The Expenditures pie graph shows where we spent funds in the fiscal year.

FY 2023 REVENUE



FY2023 EXPENDITURES





Lewis & Clark Library Foundation  
120 S. Last Chance Gulch  
Helena, MT 59601



**Loren Graham** is an award-winning poet, essayist, and Professor of English at Carroll College. He has three books of poetry, *Mose* (1994), *The Ring Scar* (2010) and *Places I Was Dreaming* (2015) from which he read a poem at the Library Foundation's 2019 Community Leaders Poetry

**SAVE THE DATE!**

*Celebrating a  
Writer's Journey*

**Tuesday, February 13, 2024**

**Lewis & Clark Library**

**LOREN GRAHAM  
in conversation with  
VIRGINIA REEVES**

**Stay tuned for more info in January!**



**Virginia Reeves** serves on the Lewis & Clark Library Foundation Board, writes novels, and teaches at Helena College. *Celebrating a Writer's Journey* was launched in 2016 with Virginia Reeves, shortly after publication of her first novel, *Work Like Any Other*.