

Seeds for Change --
How to Build a Better World
Through Civil Conversations



Presented by the Zonta Club of Billings
Part of the ConverZations series



Please join March 16, 2023 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Northern Hotel for conversation and appetizers, dinner and dessert prepared by Executive Chef Sarah Seltvedt along with wine produced by McBride Sisters Wine Company, the largest female black owned winery in the United States. Cost: \$85

What is civil conversation? At its simplest, a civil conversation is a dialogue between 2 people or a group that intends to build a better understanding. Participants do not have to agree – what matters is the act of listening to other people and learning their perspective. The point is to raise important questions and (hopefully) hear one another’s point of view.

In an increasingly divisive society, what would it be like to hold civil conversations in our own families and communities? How can we create space for people to come together and have these conversations? Join our dynamic and informative conversation hosts to learn skills for having respectful conversations that clarify differences, search for common ground, and affirm the importance of relationships. Learn how to be aware of you own “inner-polarizers.”

The Zonta ConverZations hosts come from diverse backgrounds and professions. The guest selects a table to join with a total of eight people to share dialogue to better understand the topic the host has vast experience and expertise. The topics and hosts are:

The Responsible Use of Technology and Social Media: Digital Citizenship – Dr. Susan Balter-Reitz, Professor, MSU-Billings Department of Communication and Theatre, and radio host



Dr. Sue Balter-Reitz (Rights) has an MA in Persuasion from the University of Wyoming and a PhD in Rhetoric and Law from the University of Washington. She has been teaching at MSU-Billings since 2002 and is currently Director of e-Learning. During the day, she masquerades as a mild-mannered Legal Argument scholar (for which she was named the 2015 recipient of the Franklin Haiman award for outstanding research in Freedom of Expression), but on weekends she metamorphoses into a Grateful Dead scholar and is the host for Dead of the Night on Yellowstone Public Radio.

Positive Conversations and Projects with Indigenous People – Jean Bearcrane, Executive Director, Montana Native Women's Coalition



Jean Bearcrane is an attorney, a member of the Crow Tribe and the current executive director of the Montana Native Coalition. She began practicing law in 1984 after graduating from Marquette University Law School. Jean's clients have been primarily federally-recognized Indian tribes. She has also taken on additional roles besides attorney, including teaching at Montana State University-Billings, conference speaker, trainer, and mentor for students and new law school graduates. However, her most cherished role is mom, grandmother, and great-grandmother to her children, nieces, nephews and their children.

Using Civil Language in Legal Settings – Honorable Colette Davies, District Court Judge, Montana 13th Judicial District



Judge Colette Davies is a Montana District Court Judge, serving in the Montana 13th Judicial District, Yellowstone County. She has been a member of the State Bar of Montana since 1997, and is admitted to practice in Montana, including the Montana Federal District Court, as well as the Ninth and Tenth Circuit Courts of Appeal. From 2005 through 2010, Colette served as an appointed judge for the City of Billings Municipal Court, one of the highest-volume courts in the state of Montana, where she worked closely with therapeutic treatment courts, including drug court and mental health court.

Colette is married to Bill Davies. They are the proud parents of Jack and Chloe.

Keeping Women Relevant in Media Conversations – Nadya Faulx, News Director, Yellowstone Public Radio



Nadya Faulx joined Yellowstone Public Radio as news director in October 2021. Before joining YPR, she spent six years as digital news editor/reporter for the NPR affiliate in Wichita, Kansas, where her work earned several Kansas Association of Broadcasters awards and a regional Edward R. Murrow award for Excellence in Social Media. Originally from Texas, Nadya has lived and worked in Colorado, Illinois, Washington, D.C.; and North Dakota. She lives in Billings with her cat, Dragon, and dog, Trooper, and enjoys hiking, crocheting, and traveling as often as possible.

Countering Cultural Stereotypes (Prejudice) to Embrace Authenticity – Stella Fong, author, radio host and culinary instructor



Stella Fong hosts *Flavors Under the Big Sky: Celebrating the Bounty of the Region* for Yellowstone Public Radio and contributes regularly to *Yellowstone Valley Magazine*, the *Last Best Plates* column for the *Montana Food Section* as well as *Edible Bozeman*. She's author to *Flavors Under the Big Sky: Recipes and Stories from Yellowstone Public Radio and Beyond*, *Historic Restaurants of Billings*, and *Billings Food*.

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in Company Conversations – Val Jeffries, Regional Director of Operations, Holiday Companies



Val Jeffries has been the regional direction of Holiday Stationstores, gas and convenience outlets for over 30 years. Jeffries set out to empower and educate women locally through newsletters and “Coffees and Conversations” when in 2018, the corporate partner of Holiday Stationstores, Couche Tard and Circle K, formed The ACT Women’s Council to help advance the careers and strengthen the positions of women by providing mentors, sponsors.

Women in Restaurants and Food – Jen Marble, Co-Owner Marble Table



Jen Marble co-owns the restaurant, The Marble Table, located on historic Montana Avenue with her husband Jason. Through her restaurant that serves elegant comfort food, she welcomes diners nightly into what she lovingly calls her “home”. The couple recently opened Bearded Dog Pub Grub with a speakeasy theme serving upscale pub food.

Navigating Political Correctness in the Political Arena – Dr. Mary McNally, Montana State Senator



Dr. Mary McNally received a [Bachelor of Arts in Urban Studies](#) from [Worcester State College](#), a Masters of Business Administration from [Indiana University](#), and a PhD in [Economic Geography](#) from the University of Chicago. Mary retired from MSU-Billings in 2017 after 29 years of teaching and working with students and was honored as an outstanding teacher. She began her political career in 2010, while still a faculty member at MSU-Billings. She was elected to the [Montana House of Representatives](#) in 2010 and served through 2014. In 2015, Mary was elected to the Montana Senate, where she served through 2022.

Mary is married to Monte Smith, a geologist. They enjoy living near Pioneer Park, fishing (especially on the Stillwater), hiking in the Beartooths, fossil hunting in the Pryors, and skiing.

Conversations in Literature – Bobbi Otte, Library Director, Rocky Mountain College



Bobbi Otte is currently in her 22nd year at the Rocky Mountain College Library and has been the Director of the Library for 9 of those years. She has served as the chair of the Montana Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee from 2013-2015 and continued to serve until 2018. She serves as the Chair of the General Council for the academic library consortium TRAILS (Treasure State Academic Information & Library Services) and Treasurer for Bahsic (Billings area health sciences information consortium). She attends a Banned Books club once a month where lively discussions occur on the reasons for the challenge or banning of a book. Otte shares, “I am passionate about individuals having the freedom to read and am proud to be in a profession that actively promotes this.”

The Value of Civil Dialogue in Art – Terri Porta, muralist and sculptor



Terri Porta is a painter, muralist and contemporary sculptor working in metal, wood, ceramics and any other material readily available. She was selected as the first ever Artist in Residence for the City of Billings. Her murals can be seen all over the city, including the Billings City Hall Parking garage and the tunnel on the MSU-Billings campus. Terri graduated from Montana State University Billings with her Bachelor of Fine Art degree and a women's study minor. She has an established art business, and her fine art is collected internationally and has been exhibited at group shows and in museums all over the region.

The Hard Conversations about the End of Life – Jessica Scheer, NP, Clinical Director,
Riverstone Health Hospice and Home Care



Jessica Scheer is an Alabama native who moved to Billings 11 years ago. A Nurse Practitioner who will be transitioning into a role as Clinical Director of Riverstone's Hospice and Home Care teams, she is passionate about Hospice and Palliative Care. She has worked for both St. Vincent (now Intermountain Health) and Billings Clinic and most recently spent a year training with an amazing Palliative Care team at Providence Sacred Heart Hospital in Spokane. Her dream job would include bringing a warm meal and a nice bottle of wine to your family dinner, to facilitate conversation about Advanced Care Planning and wishes regarding quality of life. She spends most of her time with her two kids and loves her friends, quirky art, weekend trips exploring Montana, and any time spent outside with people (and dogs) she loves.