

THE BIG SKY YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM:



BRINGING THE BEST IN LIFE TO YOUTH

For Jessica, a sophomore at Bridger Alternative School, snowboarding could not have been further from her reality. "Going out and snowboarding was not something I did. I was never outdoorsy or athletic," she said. "But I was going through a hard time and my school counselor suggested I apply to the Big Sky Youth Empowerment Program." A few weeks later, Jessica was given a new set of gear, a snowboard, bindings, boots, a lift ticket, and an opportunity to see her life from a new perspective. Her face lit up as she talked about her experience. "I could be totally myself," she said.

Raphael, a sophomore, has participated in the program for two years. "It has helped me be more confident," he says, "and to trust myself and others."

Now in its fifth year, the Big Sky Youth Empowerment Program (BYEP) offers 10-week snowboarding, skiing, and fly-fishing programs to young people who need new opportunities. "In 2001, we started out with five kids, five volunteer mentors, and ten weeks of free snowboarding at Big Sky Resort," says Pete MacFadyen, BYEP Founder and Executive Director. "This year, we will have 24 kids doing snow sports, 12 learning how to fly fish, and 12 participating in a new 'girl's empowerment' summer program."

A licensed mental health counselor, MacFadyen created the Big Sky Youth Empowerment Program because he felt that one-on-one counseling was having little impact on the youth he saw in his private practice. "I thought about happiness in my own life," he said, "and realized it came from being outside in the mountains or on rivers. I wanted to create opportunities for kids to participate in these things and to discuss life issues on their own terms."

Life issues for this age group usually center on relationships, identity, and a burgeoning sense of independence. Jackie, a senior, talks about cliques and the feeling of not belonging. Chaz, a junior, laments that there aren't many free activities or places available for teens. People get bored, so they start doing drugs, says Darren, a senior. "I'd guess that 60 to 70 percent of Bozeman high-school kids have access to drugs," adds Chaz.

According to MacFadyen, youth are dealing with all sorts of issues, including drugs, alcohol, chronic poverty, inadequate parenting, abuse, isolation, neglect, and depression. "There are a lot of kids that just fall through the cracks," says MacFadyen. "They are good kids, with good potential, but they've been dealt a rough set of cards."

According to the National

Institute of Mental Health, one in ten adolescents in the U.S. suffers from debilitating mental health disorders, including anxiety disorders; attention deficit and disruptive behavior disorders; autism, and other pervasive developmental disorders. While some of these problems are genetic and chronic, many are environmental and temporary. Research suggests that adults can help kids mitigate or avoid mental health problems by ensuring that youth have opportunities to cultivate strong friendships with peers and adults, by listening and talking with kids, by supporting their participation in supervised activities, and by giving them opportunities to experience success. These are precisely the kinds of things offered in programs like the Big Sky Youth Empowerment Project.

"Sometimes all our society has to offer troubled kids is a punitive law enforcement system," says MacFadyen. "How does that help kids build trusting relationships with themselves, their peers, or adults?" He shakes his head, and looks out the open window of his third floor office in the Bozeman Hotel.

"Most young people feel really alone. Much of the time, their lives are really stressful and not at all fun," says MacFadyen. "We try to give them a break from that stress and provide opportunities to have fun, learn new skills, and connect with others." Ben, a sophomore at Bridger Alternative School, echoes the sentiment, "Kids need something to do in this town. Something to get their minds off the stuff they're dealing with."

Not surprisingly, the program is extremely popular among youth, parents, and counselors alike. "Last year 105 kids applied for 24 slots," says MacFadyen. "And these applications are coming from kids that are not generally motivated." With most BYEP referrals coming from other kids, the program has gained a lot of credibility among youth wary of adult-led interventions.

In fact, BYEP maintains a very active youth advisory board that helps the organization stay in touch with the needs and aspirations of the youth it serves. Although BYEP offers access to fun sports and a set of new gear for kids who complete the 10-week program, the program itself is no slouch. BYEP participants and volunteer mentors spend one weekend day recreating, plus attend one evening meeting each week. The meetings offers a chance to work on team-building and trust exercises,

allowing kids to get to know each other more personally and build solid friendships.

"I'm really proud of myself for making it through this program," adds Darren. The other kids nod in (Cont. on page 57)

BY HEIDI LASHER

Contender: Narrow Doorways (Cont. from page 10)

Aren't we all taught to open doors for others?

It's difficult to see how voting at the stadium with voters from five other precincts will benefit many members of my neighborhood, especially the elderly, who would doubtlessly prefer voting close to home and inside a heated building. Let's all hope, for democracy's sake, it's not snowing on Nov. 7.

Brian Maffly can be reached at brianmaffly@msn.com

Yellowstone's Future (Cont. from page 15)

CELL TOWERS

Keeping Yellowstone natural is getting tougher these days, and one area of bubbling controversy is building cell phone towers inside the park. The cell phone is ubiquitous in modern American life, and it is easy to see why many would like to have cell service available everywhere they go.

That said, it is equally true that people talking loudly on a cell phones while you're trying to enjoy Old Faithful's eruption or watching elk graze would be not only distracting, but downright rude. But many visitors to Yellowstone have little attachment to the natural world and simply don't know any better. So, is it the park's job to enable their often-inane conversations, or should the environs inside the park reflect the values of the natural world and the park itself?

Cell towers, as well as the provision of more high-end amenities, are like the other ongoing controversies in Yellowstone. Those who value the park as a rare refuge of nature and intact ecosystems in an increasingly frantic and disruptive world will have to weigh in with the decision-makers to keep it that way. But even so, politics and the influence of special interests are, as we have seen all too often, likely to have an undue influence on the future.

THE BUBBLE

In the end, however, all the debate and contention over who or what or how many people should travel in the park, what amenities should be provided, or how they travel may be a moot point. Why? Because according to the latest geologic reports, an enormous bubble of seething magma is rising under Yellowstone Lake and, depending on what happens, the park as we know it may no longer exist. It could blow up, taking out life as far away as Helena—or it could collapse.

No one really knows the future of Yellowstone—and some day, Nature will simply take her course, despite the politics, the posturing, and the Great Debate.

The Future of Yellowstone? Ha! The best advice is to enjoy what Yellowstone has right now, to treat it very kindly, and to be happy in your hearts for what you have experienced.

Captivity for Yellowstone Bison: (Cont. from page 17)

eventually relocated to other public land or Indian reservations. That comes to \$13,111 per bison, assuming that a large number of yearlings participate and that the quarantined bison have a high rate of brucellosis-free reproduction. "However, the reward of conserving unique genetics, the benefits of alleviating social conflict, and the expense of managing an unregulated population of bison...must be weighed against this cost," says the study.

In other words, in order to spread the ecological wealth of the Yellowstone bison, some of them must become captive, closely managed animals for as long as it takes to ensure the quarantine process is working. Aune has embraced rather than downplayed the paradox; he sees the quarantine facility as a way to repeat the "success story" of Yellowstone's Buffalo Ranch. Like Peter Holt, who said of his dangerous mission to capture bison calves from the wild herd in 1903, "it had to be done," those involved in the new buffalo ranch may feel some qualms about separating two hundred calves from their mothers and holding them captive, but they believe it will be for the best in the long run.

Mary Ann Franke is the author of "To Save the Wild Bison: Life on the Edge in Yellowstone," published by the University of Oklahoma Press. This article was excerpted from the Summer 2005 issue of "Montana: The Magazine of Western History." Visit www.montanahistoricalsociety.org or call 406-444-4708 to request an introductory issue.

Yellowstone - Do we love it to death? (Cont. from page 20)

cause adults to leave the nest or den, thus exposing eggs or young to the elements or predators. Photographers have been responsible for the loss of many Sandhill Crane nests visible from the road on the Northern Range. The proximity of wolf watchers may have led to the failure of a Trumpeter Swan nest in the Lamar Valley and may have driven a wolf from her den prematurely endangering the survival of her pups.

Education is important in order to prevent these tragedies. Information leaflets at entrances could be more explicit. Closures and enforcement of restrictions are important to help maintain a fragile balance. Viewing wildlife with a professional guide is always a good idea. Guided tours will enhance people's outdoor experience and limit the impact on the wildlife. It is a thin line we are walking. We humans feel the need to connect with the wild, but our gain should not be the loss of the animals that need to feed, breed, reproduce and maintain their social structure in the environment that we are visiting.

I look out the window at the bear and her cub still stranded on the wrong side of the road. While I feel bad for her and curse my situation of being stuck in traffic, the bear makes a sudden dash onto the road. The people make an equally fast dash for their car doors. The ranger comes alive and motions traffic to move. I am glad to get out of here. As I drive by, I catch a last glimpse of the running bear's rump and the little cub in hot pursuit, and I hope that the next time I see a bear I will find no reason to feel ashamed about my species' bad manners when visiting another's home.

Gardening in Paradise (Cont. from page 29)

who can be certain? We do know that the deer managed to bypass the fence and paw up most of our root vegetables, although we did manage to salvage a few carrots and radishes, which, incidentally, were punishment foods in my youth. So even though most of what I got from gardening in the Valley had negative associations, there are always the few salvageable poop peas and the daily workout (downward dog is much easier after a weeding session), we're still planning another garden this year. Only this time with a higher fence and my own .22.

Big Sky Youth Empowerment Program : (Cont. from page 30)

agreement. "I made it to all the Monday night meetings, except one. That's pretty good for someone who doesn't usually finish things."

With an eagerness that belies her tough exterior, Jessica describes her ideal day: "I'd wake up late, get a cinnamon milkshake at Rocky Mountain Roasters, drive up to Big Sky with my friends, play good music, and snowboard the rest of the day with my whole BYEP group." She nods in satisfaction. "That would be a good day."

Interested in learning more about BYEP? Visit their website: www.byep.org or call 539-0399 to find more about attending their fundraiser on May 12 in the Emerson Ballroom at 7 p.m.

Solstice Chowder (Cont. from page 35)

good for immediate cooking, only a bit too damaged or old for market. I picked through the cull basket and added morels to the pan in which I had browned the meat. I also added chopped onion, butter, sherry, and more red wine from the box.

The Frenchman came into the cook tent to inspect.

"Culls?" he exclaimed in disbelief. "Tell Black Dog he ees a steengy beach for using culls on Solstice."

Black Dog declined to comment on this allegation, and the Frenchman returned with large handfuls of prime specimens, which I added to the simmering pot. When the mushroom pot started to dry out, I added the stock, a cup at a time, from the pot of potatoes. I also added more sherry, and more wine from the box.

Finally, I added half and half to the mushrooms, and then dumped them into the pot with the potatoes, to which I also added the browned meat. I dumped in a box of parmesan croutons for some extra body, gave it 15 minutes on medium heat for it all to cook together and then served. Voila.

"Eet's almost perfect," admitted the Frenchman. "Maybe only if you had smoked the mushrooms before cooking them it would be better."

I finally shut up the Frenchman by handing him a bottle of Yukon Jack. This only succeeded for the short term, however.

Summer Theatre (Cont. from page 52)

lowed by the beloved Vaudeville skits. Evening curtain time is 7 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday, with Saturday and Wednesday matinees at 2 p.m.. Phone reservations may be made at 1-800-828-2969. Check the website at virginiacityplayers.com for the exact schedule. You can also buy tickets online.

Finally, the irrepressible college kids at the Playmill Theatre in West Yellowstone have embarked upon their 43rd season. This year's shows are Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Joseph and The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," plus "Forever Plaid," and "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers." Early in the season shows are at 7:30 p.m. When things really get up to speed, there will be two shows a day, at 6 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Tickets can be purchased at the website at www.playmill.com and are \$12.50 to \$15, depending upon the day of the week. Group rates are available for groups of 25 or more.

So, win a few, lose a few. No Vigilantes at the Museum of the Rockies this summer, no Bridger Mountain Theatre Festival, nothing from Montana TheatreWorks. But we'll get a look at a promising new venue at the stockyards and our neighboring theatre communities will keep us hopping.

Film: Impossible Missions.... (Cont. from page 53)

make it creepier than one imagined when reading it. THE DA VINCI CODE is one of the most popular novels of our time, and a film version of it was inevitable. It made \$77 million on its opening weekend, with mostly negative reviews, a testament to its popularity. However, I doubt anyone will feel that the movie is better than the book. Expectations are high, and there's almost no way to meet them. So, like MISSION IMPOSSIBLE III, which (even if it is the best film in the trilogy) cannot overcome the off-screen antics of its star, and POSEIDON, which cannot surpass the imprint of the original film, THE DA VINCI CODE is not a terrible film, and it's not a great film. It's adequate, and for the money and talent involved, that's something of a disappointment.
