

A newsletter of the Montana Association of Teachers of English Language Arts  
[www.matelamt.com](http://www.matelamt.com)

## MFPE (FORMERLY MEA-MFT) CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

### Conference Strand Well-Received; 'Keep Calm and Teach On'

By Donna Miller

**T**he Montana Federation of Public Employees (MFPE) Educators' Conference, Oct. 17-19, with its *Keep Calm and Teach On* theme did not disappoint those who attended. MATELA's program featured nearly 40 sectionals and three keynotes from which educators could choose to personalize their professional development.



On Wednesday evening, MATELA members and other convention-attendees packed the meeting room at the Rib and Chop House for a kick-off to the conference with a program entitled "Validations, Vexations, and Victories."

#### Figure 1

Take me out to the Chop House  
Take me out to the pub.  
Buy me some chees efries with pepper jack,  
Don't dare give me a healthier snack.  
Let's root, root, root for our MATELA  
With Writing Projects in house.  
Let's drink one, two, three toasts and shout  
At the Rib/Chop House!

#### Figure 2

Take me out to our fall game,  
The conference that makes us proud.  
Show me three keynoters with the knack,  
First-day sectionals will bring us back  
Where we'll root and hoot for the new name  
M-F-P-E is no shame!  
And it's four, five, six drinks you're out  
With yourself to blame!

Dana Haring facilitated this conference launch, distributing die-cut Vs to each person present and inviting educators to record a validating, vexing, or victorious detail. After a share-out session, participants pinned their Vs to a paper tree Haring had made as a sign of growth and validation. The tree held a place of honor in MATELA's hospitality room at Skyview High School for the duration of the conference.

In an open mike format, several people shared writing during the evening. MATELA's Distinguished Educator Curt Bobbitt offered two toasts, which were sung to the tune of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" (See Figures 1, 2).

Another well-received "Piece for Many Voices" was written and read by multiple authors from the Billings School District, who celebrated teaching. Lauren Zent, who teaches at Billings West High School, initiated the writing and then sent the paper around the table (See Figure 3).



Photo by Sue Stolp

**Presenter Dana Haring with her "V" Tree where participants pinned their Validations, Vexations and Victories.**

#### Figure 3

When I signed up for this event, I was not sure if it was about witches or Halloween, but now I realize it is about the profession of performance—performing for our students, their parents, and our principals.

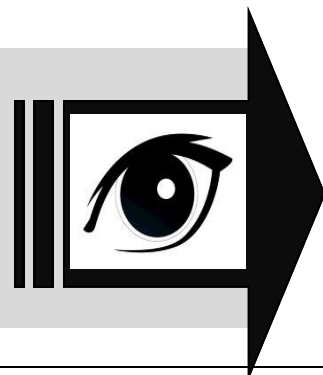
Performing for students is the best way to share ideas and to learn from others. This way we can gain knowledge from our peers and colleagues when presenting in front of class.

It is extremely important to engage the motivated student, the unmotivated student, the detached student, and the one who is struggling with her worthiness—because they are all worthy. . . worthy to engage friends, engage curriculum, engage daily challenges, and ultimately to engage life with the skill-sets obtained through each one of us. It's SCARY. . . yet there is nothing more important than our walk through the "Haunted House" of TEACHING!

See CONFERENCE PLANNING, P 2

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OPI UPDATE:

## Planning Meeting for MFPE Conference to Take Place in January

### MATELA Seeks Ideas for Next Year's Conference in Belgrade

By Donna Miller

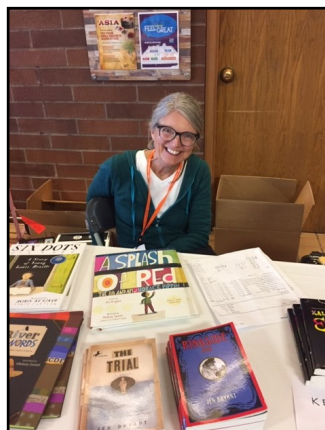
**E**rik Burke, Executive Director of the Montana Federation of Public Employees (MFPE), announced in mid-November that planning has begun for the 2019 Educator Conference in Belgrade, Oct. 17-18.



Representatives from MATELA, WPUBS, and 16 other curriculum groups from across the state will be attending the planning meeting Jan. 25. The meeting is scheduled for 9 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Hilton Garden Inn at 2023 Commerce Way in Bozeman.

Marco Ferro, MFPE Director of Public Policy and Professional Development, will be working directly with curriculum group leaders throughout the planning process to develop more than 500 teacher-led professional learning workshops, keynotes, and institutes.

MATELA is seeking feedback from its membership about topics or programs that might add to their professional tool kits. Any ideas can be emailed to MATELA President, Sue Stolp, [sue.stolp@bsd7.org](mailto:sue.stolp@bsd7.org). ♦



Joyce Herbeck at a table where keynote speaker Jen Bryant's books were displayed.

Photo by Sue Stolp

**MSU-Bozeman Professor Joyce Herbeck's Children's Literature students presented at MFPE. They presented Theodor Seuss Geisel award books.**

Photo by Joyce Herbeck



## ALAN Workshop Yields 35 Pounds of Books, 69 Authors

By Joyce Herbeck

The Assembly on Literature for Adolescents

of NCTE (ALAN) convened Monday and Tuesday, Nov. 19 and 20, following the NCTE annual convention in Houston. As they arrived Monday morning, over 400 participants each received the 35-pound box of books and proceeded to arrange them on their table space in order of the author appearances.

Speakers were grouped by genres or themes of their books: fantasy, historical fiction, mythology, gun violence, tragedy and grief, thrillers, science fiction, anthologies, fear and hate and forgiveness, refugees and immigration and deportation, WW II, enchantments and fables, and identity.

In 20-minute sessions, the format varied from individual speakers to

panels to two-author "conversations."

Authors ranged from old favorites (Laurie Halse Anderson and Chris Crutcher) to hot new arrivals (Jason Reynolds and Angie Thomas). One hour of Monday consisted of 12 breakout sessions that allowed participants to choose a topic of young adult literature presented by ALAN members.

The variety of format and quality of author presentations made the time fly. Soon it was time to get in line to ship books home.

The ALAN workshop is well worth extending the convention time. The educators who attend this event are passionate about young adult literature, and the authors are appreciative of the interest in their books.

ALAN has its own young adult literature award that recognizes the best books of each year. The Amelia Elizabeth Walden award honors the titles most relevant to teens, published in the United States, of high literary merit, and with a positive approach to life. This year's winners are *The Hate U Give*, by Angie Thomas; *Dear Martin*, by Nic Stone; *Long Way Down*, by Jason Reynolds; *The Nowhere Girls*, by Amy Reed; and *An Uninterrupted View of the Sky*, by Melanie Crowder.

If you haven't experienced an ALAN workshop, it's not too late! Put it on your to-do list for next year in Baltimore. ♦

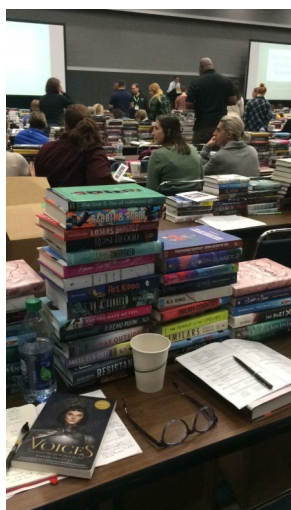


Photo by Joyce Herbeck

**Stacks of books await conversations with ALAN members and authors.**

## EARN RECOGNITION AND CASH

# Contests, Magazines for Fostering Civic Growth in Montana Teens

By Donna Miller

**T**he Office of Public Instruction (OPI) recently released an announcement, which states that fostering civic growth in Montana students means engaging them in their local and regional communities. In meeting this goal, OPI officials suggest giving students opportunities to write for publications and contests. Such experience imparts not only a relevant community connection but also an authentic audience.

One publication, *New Montana Voices*, is a literary magazine dedicated to the creativity of Montana's young adults and connecting them to today's vibrant cultural conversation. The magazine sponsors annual contests for Montanans who are high-school aged.

Entries are accepted in three artistic categories: poetry, prose, and photography. Prizes are awarded for highest achievement in each category, with first place earning \$300, second \$150, and third \$50. All entrants whose work is included in one of the two magazines will also be provided with a free issue. A literary and a photography magazine are published at the end of the school year, using the prior year's submissions.

Magazine officials also award a \$500 prize to the teacher, librarian, or mentor who wins the Montana Writing Teacher of the Year award.

*New Montana Voices* is a collaboration between husband/wife founders Steve Moore and Cindy Edstrom, who have partnered with former Montana Poet Laureate and current editor of *Many Voices Press* Lowell Jaeger



and *Whitefish Review* editor and founder Brian Schott. Those interested in more information about the contest or wishing to submit an entry for publication should visit [www.newmontanavoices.com](http://www.newmontanavoices.com).

Another competition available, one that challenges high-school students to create works of art inspired by their state, is the Western Governor's Association's (WGA) Celebrate the West regional art competition.

The entry deadline is April 28, and students are welcome to submit artwork used for other contests or assignments. Artwork will be returned. Details about the contest are available online at [westgov.org/celebrate-the-west](http://westgov.org/celebrate-the-west).

For inspiration, students may draw ideas from a variety of sources, including state history, landmarks, natural resources, National Parks and Monuments, or people, communities, and cultural practices, provided the artwork is original. WGA defines original artwork as "artwork which is unique in concept, design, and execution and is created directly and personally by the student. Original work is not a copy or imitation of another person's work."

Winning artists will receive cash prizes, and their works will be displayed at an upcoming WGA Governors' meeting, as well as on the WGA website.

A third opportunity is the 2018-2019 Montana Poetry Out Loud (POL) program, an event that encourages students to learn about great poetry through memorization and recitation. This contest, open to high-school students in grades 9-12, engages youth in the work of noted poets, past and present. Created by the National Endow-

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See CIVIC GROWTH P 5

## MATELA Membership Form

Please join/renew by filling out this form, making out a check, and mailing both to MATELA's treasurer at the address on the bottom of this form.

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Street/Box \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_

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### PLEASE CHECK ONE:

Student membership: \$10 \_\_\_\_\_

Retired membership: \$10 \_\_\_\_\_

Regular yearly membership: \$25 \_\_\_\_\_

Special 3-year membership: \$65 \_\_\_\_\_

Special combined membership \$51 \_\_\_\_\_  
(includes MCTM, MSTA)

New member: \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail your check and this form to**  
Dana Haring, MATELA Treasurer  
620 First Avenue West, Kalispell, MT 59901

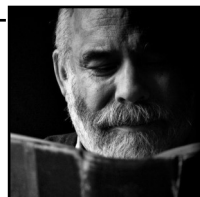
**Or sign up online at [www.matelamt.com](http://www.matelamt.com)**  
Credit cards accepted online only



## BOOK REVIEW

# Humor for Humanists—Is ‘The Shakespeare Requirement’ Still Relevant?

By Curt Bobbitt



**T**he satire in *The Shakespeare Requirement* by Julie Schumacher (Doubleday, 2018) targets fictional Payne University. The title refers to one of the plot conflicts, an attempt to marginalize Shakespeare and literature in general as academic requirements.

Amidst sophomoric characterizations and slapstick situations, this and other story lines echo anti-humanities trends on 21st-century campuses. A capsule review in the *New Yorker* calls the novel “an affecting portrait of the fate of the humanities in a market-driven world” (September 10, 2018).

As the fall term begins at Payne, those trends appear through an ambitious, avaricious chair of the economics department. Economics and English share the same campus building. Chair Roland R. Gladwell of economics schemes to annex conference rooms, classrooms, and university budgets away from Chair Jason Fitger of English. Gladwell’s methods include generating large financial contributions to the university, chairing a secret-but-influential quality assessment committee (QUAP), and attacking English faculty personally.

As new chair of the mixed-up English department, Professor Fitger must struggle against more than the direct threats from Professor Gladwell and economics. Fitger’s predecessor failed to submit a required departmental Statement of Vision (SOV): “a nebulous document intended to summarize the department’s purpose—as if the teaching of literature and composition were something obscure.”

Because of the delay, the department must approve the statement unanimously, a prospect Fitger compares to “a rainbow over a field of unicorns.”

Throughout the novel, the narrator and various characters judge the English Department “one of the most ungovernable academic units at Payne [with] a reputation for discord and dysfunction going back 40 years.” The attacks will sound familiar and humorous (or libelous) to English language arts instructors.

Gladwell the economist is particularly vitriolic: “He hated English. He hated its sloppy, undisciplined students; he hated its lawlessly oblique course offerings; he hated its faculty, probably half of whom were insane.”

The novel stereotypes English department faculty at Payne. Fitger, a creative writing specialist, has published nothing in years. His lack of artistic and administrative creativity contrasts the numerous letters of reference he composed in Schumacher’s previous novel about him, *Dear Committee Members* (Doubleday, 2014).

In *The Shakespeare Requirement*, Fitger must oversee colleagues such as Sandra Atherman, who dresses as the Bronte sisters; Helena Stang, who refuses to serve on committees; and Albert Tyne, who “preserved his own urine as if it were wine.” Readers may see their least-favorite colleagues—but never themselves—in the department’s 12 professors.

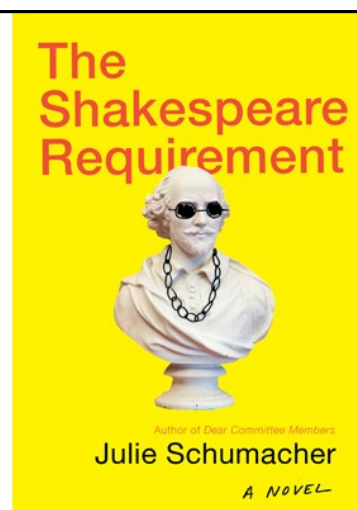
The English department’s oldest professor, Dennis Cassovan, teaches only classes about Shakespeare and is out of touch with all popular culture, including 21<sup>st</sup>-century treatments of Shakespeare. Cassovan “had tried to be open-minded when dealing with the department’s theorists (though he wished they could write); the creative writers (though he wished they had standards); and those who would fill their syllabi with sociological studies, television shows, discussions of sexual mores, food, politics, animals, fashion, and popular culture.”

Professor Cassovan adamantly refuses to endorse any version of the SOV that does not mention Shakespeare explicitly.

*The Shakespeare Requirement* skewers administrative cluelessness in its portraits of Payne’s leaders. President Nyla Hoffman, with “the personal charm of a KGB agent,” approaches the university’s problems by hiring “an army of

administrators—vice provosts, assistant vice provosts, associate deans, duchesses, dukes, footmen, jesters, earls.” Dean Philip Hinkler struggles with communication because he is “prone to semi-sentences that expired, half finished, in rhetorical cul-de-sacs.”

Only a few students appear as named characters in the novel. Angela Vackrey, a naïve freshman who becomes pregnant after a



## NCTE CONVENTION

# National Conference Provides PD, Social Interaction, Awards

By Donna Bulatowicz

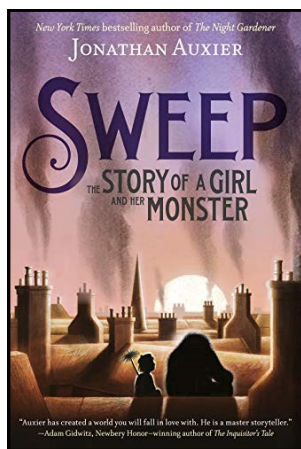
One of the joys of this school year has been the annual NCTE convention. Some of the highlights for this year's convention included being part of the Charlotte Huck committee, attending the annual business meeting and affiliate breakfast, meeting new people, spending time with valued colleagues and friends, and learning from and with other literacy educators.



## Charlotte Huck Award for Outstanding Fiction for Children

We selected our winner, honors, and recommended books in an all-day meeting on Thursday, prior to the start of the convention.

I enjoyed working with the other six committee members, discussing books, examining various perspectives, and spending time together. Our selections were announced on Saturday, at the children's book award luncheon. *Sweep: The Story of a Girl and her Monster* by Jonathan Auxier won the 2019 Charlotte Huck Award.



## Annual Business Meeting

The annual business meeting on Friday night allowed attendees the opportunity to meet with individuals from affiliates across the nation as well as other members of NCTE. Part of the meeting includes the discussion of resolutions. This year, there were three resolutions.

The first resolution, "Resolution on Literacy Teaching on Climate Change," highlights critical examination of texts and debates around climate change. Some attendees proposed changes to wording which were accepted.

The second resolution, "Resolution on English Education for Critical Literacy in Politics and Media," updates the 1971 resolution. The focus of this resolution centers around analyzing and evaluating texts, examining the impact of language, and facilitating critical

engagement with and discussions around current events. This resolution was approved following discussion.

The "Resolution on Alternatives to Guns in Schools" not only opposes arming teachers and students but also supports anti-racist bias training, empathy, restorative justice, and conflict resolution. There was discussion around wording in parts of the initial proposal; the resolution passed.

NCTE welcomes submissions from members for resolutions; please submit yours by Oct. 15. More information is available at <http://www2.ncte.org/resources/position-statements/share-your-idea/>

## Affiliate Breakfast

The affiliate breakfast provided an opportunity for affiliates from each region to spend time together as well as learn from each other. I sat with other affiliates from region 7 and the outgoing NCTE president, Jocelyn Chadwick, and enjoyed the conversations about each affiliate's work.

During the breakfast, various affiliates received awards; MATELA received a newsletter of excellence award for *Update* at the annual affiliate breakfast on Sunday. This was a fantastic start to the last day of the conference.

## Call for Proposals

The 2019 NCTE convention will be in Baltimore, Maryland Nov. 21-24. The call for proposals is now open. The theme is "Spirited Inquiry." Proposals must be submitted prior to January 16 at 1 p.m. EST. Please consider submitting yours!

[convention.ncte.org/2019-convention/call-for-proposals](http://convention.ncte.org/2019-convention/call-for-proposals) ♦



Photo courtesy NCTE Exchange

**Donna Bulatowicz accepts the Outstanding Newsletter Award on behalf of MATELA.**

## From Page 3 CIVIC GROWTH

# Enter Students for School and Regional Contests in January, February

ment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation and sponsored in Montana by the Montana Arts Council, this program further assists students in mastering public speaking skills, building self-confidence, and learning about history and contemporary life.

The program begins in individual classrooms or within school groups. From there, students advance to schoolwide contests in January and to regional events in February. Twenty one students

from the seven regional events held on Montana campuses will advance to the State Finals in Helena on March.. The program year culminates in Washington D.C. in late April, where one student from Montana will represent the state.

For information on regional contests or for answers to any other questions, teachers should contact Monica Grable at the Montana Arts Council by calling 406-444-6522. ♦

OPI TO TAKE OVER SELECTION PROCESS

## 2020 Award for Teaching Excellence Guidelines Released

By Donna Miller



**B**ecause the Office of Public Instruction will now lead the Teacher of the Year selection and administer the Montana Teacher of the Year Program, the Montana Federation of Public Employees (MFPE) will focus their efforts on annually nominating a teacher, education support professional, or higher education faculty/staff member for the National Education Association (NEA)/NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence.

Since 1996, MFPE simply nominated the Montana Teacher of the Year for the NEA Award. With the change in program administration, President Eric Feaver recently announced: "We do not want anyone to think for a moment that we are not still completely invested in the promotion of Montana teachers as the best in the nation, so we will start right now annually nominating a Montana teacher, a member of MFPE, for the NEA/NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence."

According to Donna Graveley, MFPE Management Assistant, a curriculum group like the Montana Association of Teachers of the English Language Arts can nominate someone for the NEA Award for Teaching Excellence. That nominee would then complete the application and submit it by March 1. An award committee will review all applications; three will be selected for interviews, and one will be chosen to be the awardee.

This award recognizes, rewards, and promotes both excellence in teaching and advocacy for the profession. All current members of an NEA local affiliate or bargaining unit are eligible for the



**Dylan Huiskens 2019 Montana Teacher of the Year with Superintendent of Public Instruction Elsie Arntzen.**



*Photo courtesy OPI website*

award. Applicants for the national award are judged on five criteria: professional practice, advocacy for the profession, attention to diversity, community engagement, and leadership in professional development.

Montana has had three finalists for this award: Judie Woodhouse, Anna Baldwin, and Eileen Sheehy, all of whom were Montana Teachers of the Year and received MFPE's nomination for the NEA/NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence. Although they did not win national recognition, all three won statewide recognition at the Teacher Celebration at the annual Educator Conference.

Anyone with questions about the award or the nomination process should contact Graveley by email at [dgraveley@mfpe.org](mailto:dgraveley@mfpe.org). ♦

### From P4 SHAKESPEARE

#### *Samples of Style in Schumacher's Book: 'Approaching Writing as a Fun Experiment'*

single sexual encounter, lives up to her grandmother's description of her as a "daydreaming mouse." Lincoln Young, a 40ish graduate student, hopes to exploit Professor Cassovan's notoriety for personal gain. Ashkir, the work-study assistant in the English department office, helps its cause through his knowledge of campus politics rather than his interest or skill in composition.

Gladwell's linguistic faux pas at the end of the novel negates much of his earlier success. For a large public audience, he speaks an off-color spoonerism involving the surnames of two potential donors, Manuela Pratt and William Fixx, creators of the Pratt-Fixx donation for a remodeled building. Get it?

In another closing irony, Fitger and his ex-wife find Professor Cassovan dead at his desk. His death by heart attack differs ironically from the "dramatic form" he had convinced himself would resemble "that of a literary hero." Further preventing a tragic significance for Cassovan's death, Fitger forges Cassovan's affirmative vote for the department's Statement of Vision, providing the final required

approval, technically, "in the presence of two English department faculty members."

Author Julie Schumacher, a self-conscious introvert, told an interviewer at the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, "to create an alter ego, who can give voice to the things that come into your head that you would never say, is really satisfying." In the same interview, Schumacher mentioned her approach to teaching writing, clearly at work in her novel: "Approach writing as a fun experiment and remember why you loved it in the first place...."

*The Shakespeare Requirement* joins other parodies of college academic life—*Lucky Jim* by Kingsley Amis (1954), *Moo* by Jane Smiley (1995), *Straight Man* by Richard Russo (1997), *Hisland: Adventures in Ac-Ac-ademe* by Fedwa Malti-Douglas (1997). Bel Kaufman's *Up the Down Staircase* (1965) pillories absurdities of the pre-Internet high-school environment in epistolary form. Gulliver's third voyage includes his ludicrous tour of the grand academy of Lagado (chapters 4-6). ♦



OPI UPDATE:

# OPI Encourages Teachers To Set Goals for Self, Students

By Christy Mock-Stutz



As we enter this time of the school year, make some goals for you and your classroom!



These goals should enhance your students' learning as well as your own well-being. Here are some upcoming professional learning opportunities that can help you to reach a goal of participating in local educational activities.

Taking care of your professional needs while being part of a greater education community is rewarding and provides support for you and your fellow teachers. Throughout the year, we provide many opportunities for professional learning, in a wide range of topics and content areas.

To start, we have several upcoming conferences. In January, we will be hosting the OPI Data and Assessment Conference. In June, an OPI conference will be held in Bozeman. For registration and specific dates, simply go to the OPI website: [opi.mt.gov](http://opi.mt.gov).

In addition, the Yellowstone Writing Project out of MSU-Bozeman, will be hosting their annual Fire on the Page Conference Feb. 9. Visit their website at [www.yellowstonewritingproject.com](http://www.yellowstonewritingproject.com)

Besides these in-person opportunities, we offer free, online learning, including a new course called *How to Integrate Media Arts in Your Classroom* in early January. Be sure to check out the other literacy courses on the Hub at [opi.mt.gov/learninghub](http://opi.mt.gov/learninghub).

Some goals for students might be to polish an artifact and enter a contest. On that note, the first annual Student Podcast Challenge is underway. For 5th-12th graders, this is an opportunity for students to write and produce a podcast. Contest runs Jan. 1 - March 31. Winners will be announced in April and shared on NPR's *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*.

Another idea is the 2019 Sejong Writing Competition, which aims to introduce young adults to Korean culture through literature and poetry. The deadline is March 31 and is open to all students, regardless of ethnicity. Visit <http://sejongculturalsociety.org> Writing menu for more information.

Whether you take online courses, attend conferences, or build a community in your neighborhood—stay involved! Stay active, keep learning, set goals to keep yourself and your students learning. ♦



## Current MATELA Board and Organization Liaisons

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### Heather Parrish

*MEJ* (Montana English Journal) Editor  
Capital High School  
[hljurma@gmail.com](mailto:hljurma@gmail.com)

### Social Media

Position is open

### MATELA Website:

[www.matelamt.com](http://www.matelamt.com)  
Member of the NCTE Information Exchange, which allows reprinting of articles in other members' publications



**Dana Haring, Treasurer**  
620 First Avenue West  
Kalispell, MT 59901

**Please consider sharing your talent and expertise with  
MATELA!**

**Upcoming publication deadlines:**

**MEJ: June 1**

**Fall UPDATE: Sept. 1**

**Winter UPDATE: Dec. 1**

**Spring UPDATE: March 1**

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**Submit articles for consideration via our website at [www.matelamt.com/publications](http://www.matelamt.com/publications)**

All submissions must be in RTF or .docx format, no columns or extra spaces between paragraphs, and without embedded graphics or photos. **Include a byline** with your name the way you would like it to appear at the beginning of your copy.

If your piece includes graphics or photos, please send these jpg files as separate attachments.

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