

F E R G U S

FEATURES

Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., Lewistown, MT ♦ www.ferguselectric.coop

UNRESERVED

Lewistown native's inspirational program connects youth in Montana communities



Story by **CHARLIE DENISON** | contributing writer



James Zormeir, a 2007 Fergus High grad, has overcome many obstacles and found his way into a job at Nike, where creativity is key. He shared his inspiration and story with students in the Unreserved program during a Zoom session in March. **TOP RIGHT:** James' Unreserved art project. | **COURTESY PHOTOS**



Andrés Galaz of Hardin High School, took part in Unreserved. | **COURTESY PHOTO**

WHAT started as an assembly has become a life mission for Lewistown native Dani Phillips. A former teacher and basketball coach at Hardin High School, former student teacher in Browning and a 2008 Fergus High grad, Dani has combined her experiences to create a bridge to help youth from different backgrounds celebrate one another.

Called Unreserved, this one-hour-a-week extra-curricular humanities program for grades 10-12 is designed — as indicated in its mission statement — “to strengthen social structures in schools and give participants the chance to become the subject.”

“It’s an empowerment program that closes the gap between our diverse communities and embraces the social richness of the state,” Dani said. “The content is made up of students’ lives and diverse speakers’ knowledge and interests.”

Unreserved began as a one-time event Dani put together while teaching in Hardin, but the project has

morphed into a full-time job that continues to evolve. Made up of a team of teachers, students and speakers, the goal is for all involved to build connections, learn from, and inspire one another.

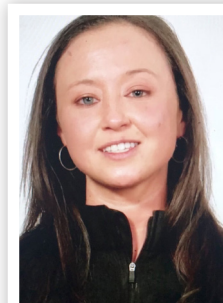
“Ideally, these connections will encourage teamwork and progress while strengthening interests and ideas,” Dani said.

Creating this concept was an organic process, Dani said, and was inspired by many of the mentors and cultural experiences she had in reservation communities. It was also inspired by one moment in particular when she was recognized by one of her

players on Hardin Senior Night.

“At Hardin Senior Night, seniors are given the opportunity to give thanks to one or two of their mentors by giving them a cultural Pendleton blanket,” said Dani.

“Sossity Spotted Wolf honored me with one, and that way of celebrating success really struck me. It honored



Dani Phillips, former teacher and coach, combined her experiences to create Unreserved, a program to help youth from different backgrounds celebrate one another.

See **UNRESERVED**, page 7



MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Carson Sweeney

Be mindful when using equipment near power lines

THE warmer spring weather is certainly greening up our service territory. What a beautiful area we get to call home.

We hope our members are blessed with moisture throughout the spring and summer. As members begin working in their fields, please be mindful of using your equipment near power lines.

Some of the new farming equipment is quite tall even when completely folded up for travel. Also

be mindful when utilizing GPS software for auto steer in your fields. If Fergus Electric has recently installed or replaced poles or ground mounted equipment, the GPS routes may need to be modified.

Welcome Andrew

We are excited to welcome our new employee, Andrew Reuterskiold, journeyman lineman, to Fergus Electric Cooperative's Roundup office. Andrew and his family recently moved to

Montana from Wisconsin, where he worked as a journeyman lineman for an electric cooperative. Our Roundup team is an exceptional group of individuals, and Andrew will fit right in.

Annual Meeting scheduled

We look forward to seeing our members at the upcoming Annual Meeting of the Membership. Please join us at the Fergus County Trade Center on Thursday, June 10. See you there! RM

Notice of annual meeting

Pursuant to Article III, Section 3 of the bylaws of Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., notice of the 83rd annual meeting is hereby given.

The member meeting will take place at the Fergus County Trade Center, Lewistown, Montana, on Thursday, June 10, 2021. Registration begins at 11 a.m., with lunch at noon.

The business meeting convenes at 1 p.m., with the order of business as follows: report of members present, reading of notice and proof of publication, election of three trustees and transaction of other business.

READ THE BOARD CANDIDATE BIOS

- PAGE 8

Scholarship drawing to be held at the annual meeting

Fergus Electric Cooperative will offer 10 \$1,000 scholarships in a drawing at this year's annual meeting, on Thursday, June 10.

Rules for the scholarship drawing are: 1) The applicant or applicant's parent/guardian must be a member of Fergus Electric Cooperative, 2) The applicant must be present at the annual meeting accompanied by a parent/guardian, 3) The applicant must have at least a "C" grade average, and 4) The scholarship may be used for undergraduate college, vo-tech or graduate studies.

No support documentation is required. Winners are determined by the luck of the draw. Checks will be written to the college or school of the winners' choice.

Please complete the following application and return it to: Fergus Electric Scholarship Drawing, 84423 U.S. Highway 87, Lewistown, MT 59457.

FERGUS ELECTRIC SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

Application due by June 7, 2021

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

College/Vo-Tech attending/will attend: _____

I maintain at least a "C" average: _____

Student Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Unreserved

Continued from page 5

reciprocity, and that's what I wanted to adopt into Unreserved. There was an element of reciprocity at Unreserved's first meeting at Fergus this year. Those who have helped make this program a reality were acknowledged and represented through enlarged photos we held up during the event. A neat group of people have joined around this and have been integral in working towards our goals."

There is much involved with Unreserved, but, according to Dani, what makes it so effective is the format it uses for students and speakers to tell their story: four quadrants combining heritage, hurdle, happiness and hope.

"We start with heritage to bring up something (or someone) in their past that influences who they are today, hurdle to represent how they have overcome an obstacle, happiness to share something that brings them joy and hope to close with what they wish to do with their lives," Dani said. "All of these subjects pull on parts of who they are, and it's been a powerful experience for those who have participated, be it students or presenters."

This was especially the case for James Zormeir, a 2007 Fergus grad and current Nike shoe designer who spoke to participating students from his alma mater, Browning and Hardin, via the online platform Zoom in March.

An integral part of the creative development behind the nearly all-recyclable Space Hippie shoe, James is grateful to have a successful artistic career, but it was no cakewalk getting there. He made this clear when sharing his hurdle.

A hurdle, Dani said, can be a disease, family occurrence, experience, social issue or some kind of loss. Dani wants all participants to feel supported around what they choose to represent. Courage, she said, is appreciated and admired, and James's courage to share such hardships about his loss meant a lot to the students present.

"The kids appreciated his example of being able to speak about difficult



Students' exhibit displayed at 2019 Unreserved assembly. | COURTESY PHOTO

things," Dani said. "Everything about James' address embodied my hopes for Unreserved. The way he used the format to tell his story illustrated just how effectual it is as an inspirational tool and how it's a way to connect people from all different walks of life. It's prompt and personal."

James' presentation was also an excellent example of perseverance.

"He had a lot of reasons to quit," Dani said, "but he didn't. He took control of the paint brush."

Students also have the opportunity to take control of the paintbrush and design their own Nike shoe based on their experiences and emotions, an artistic assignment that is another part of the Unreserved curriculum.

Giving voice to the students

James is one of several speakers Dani put together for this year's weekly convocations. Other speakers included renowned rock n' roll drummer Mark Schulman (perhaps best known for backing up P!nk), elephant trainer (and Lewistown native) Chrissy Pratt, Christian Parrish Takes The Gun (aka Supaman) and others. But what excites Dani the most is hearing directly from students, such as Lefaye Russell and Andrea Dickinson, who spoke during a recent

All-School Zoom Ceremony. Lefaye is an enrolled member of the Crow Tribe (she introduced herself in her native language) while Andrea is Canadian Cree. During their talk they shared their interests, a bit about their childhood, their dreams and their hopes for the future. Despite different backgrounds, they were united by their similarities. This is just one example, Dani said, of the real-life impact Unreserved can have.

"I think [Unreserved] is the best way to get people to care about each other," Dani said.

Just the beginning


At the time of publication there were around 55 students enrolled in the program, which offers a variety of ways for participants to interact with students from different schools. As the program continues to grow, Dani hopes to see it expand into more schools, which is already happening.

"Unreserved has seven schools interested in incorporating our format," Dani said. "This can be implemented for a week into a core class and, if schools like how it goes, they can also get involved in our humanities program, which includes speakers who use the format in order to tell their stories."

Dani said the potential of Unreserved is greater than she imagined at the get-go, which gives her much momentum moving forward.

"The goal is to continue to expand and see how many schools sign on," she said. "Ultimately I'd like to involve more schools from outside the state, as well. There are already three urban schools confirmed to take in the format and its week-long unit. It's going to be a challenge, but I'm excited and humbled to move forward."

Dani is no stranger to hurdles, and she's ready to take another leap, thanks largely to the immense support she's received and the relationships she's developed while bringing this unique concept to life.

For more information on Unreserved, go to www.urart.org. 

MEET THE BOARD CANDIDATES

In accordance with Fergus Electric Cooperative Bylaws, Article IV, Section 4.3, the nominating committees met and nominated candidates for the Board of Trustees.

In addition to the procedure set forth above, any 15 or more members acting together from the district in which a trustee is to be elected may make other nominations by petition not less than 30 days prior to the meeting, and the secretary shall post such nominations at the same place where the list of nominations made by the aforesaid committees are posted. No other method of nominating candidates for trustee shall be permitted.

Brad Arntzen



DISTRICT 3

Incumbent Brad Arntzen is a fourth-generation rancher from central Montana, where he currently operates a seed-stock Angus cattle ranch along with his family north of Hilger.

In 2001, Brad graduated from Montana State University - Bozeman with a Bachelor of Science degree in animal science. After graduation, he returned to the family ranch where he currently resides with his wife Stacie and his daughters Abbie, Ashlen and Aleia.

Brad is involved in community activities. He served as president of the Central Montana Angus Association, at which time he helped organize the Montana State Angus Tour. He also served as a director on the Central Montana Port Authority and as a director on the HRDC Loan Review Committee.

Brad was selected to be a member of the Fergus Electric Cooperative Advisory Committee, of which he was chairman. His experience on the advisory committee helped him to learn more about how a rural electric cooperative operates. He is seeking his third three-year term.

Bob Evans



DISTRICT 7

Incumbent Bob Evans is seeking a 12th term on Fergus Electric's board of directors. He is past president of Fergus Electric's board of directors as well as past president of the statewide organization, Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association, headquartered in Great Falls.

Bob says, "I see complex issues facing the cooperative in regard to long-term power supply. Maintaining quality power and affordable rates remain my top priority."

Bob earned a Bachelor of Science degree in industrial arts from the University of Montana - Western at Dillon in 1974, and returned to Geysers where he and his wife, Kathern, spent years operating a cow calf, yearling operation until his recent retirement. They have leased their ranch, yet they keep busy with ranch maintenance. Bob enjoys keeping busy traveling, checking in on kids and grandkids, and working with his fellow board members on Fergus Electric duties.

Terry Frost



DISTRICT 5

Incumbent Terry Frost has been a board member for 12 years and looks forward to the challenges of another three-year term. After serving as a lineman and foreman at Ravalli Electric for 30 years, Terry understands the complexities involved with all aspects of electric cooperatives. His knowledge of power supply, power safety, and related services as well as customer expectations, are essential in board decisions.

Terry and his wife, LaVonne, raise registered Angus Cattle in the Bull Mountains south of Roundup. They have lived there for 21 years and love the proximity of their

sons and their families. Terry and LaVonne have been married for 48 years.

Terry continues to volunteer for organizations which keep him active in the community. He has been president for the Midland Empire Angus Association and president for the Musselshell Stockgrowers, as well as for the Ravalli County Stockgrowers. Terry served as a volunteer fireman for the Corvallis fire department for many years and is a former director for the Genex Corporation. Terry currently serves on the Refuse Board for Musselshell.

Terry thanks members for their confidence in his service, and he appreciates the opportunity to venture forward for another three years as a member of this progressive board.

IDENTIFY ACCOUNT NUMBER*

WIN A \$32.50 CREDIT

If one of the following account numbers is yours, call Fergus Electric (406-538-3465) and identify yourself and your account number and you will receive a \$32.50 credit on next month's statement.

**Account 375926, Account 395949
Account 56709, Account 57100
Account 395501, Account 396337**

CONGRATULATIONS!

Nancy Carkhuff of Roundup and **Charlotte Carroll** of Lewistown were last month's winners.

*NUMBERS ARE DRAWN MONTHLY

Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc.

LEWISTOWN, MT

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

FOR OUTAGES

First: Check the fuses or breakers in the building in which the electricity is off.

Second: Check the breaker below the meter.

Third: If electricity is still out, call a neighbor to see if they have electricity.

Fourth: Call 406-538-3465 day or night or:

Dale Rikala 406-366-3374
Bret Ophus 406-366-7523
Scott Olson 406-366-5822
Carson Sweeney 406-366-0971
Bret Nellermoe (Roundup) 406-939-0636
Melanie Foran 406-462-5650
Dan Balster 406-366-0975

FERGUS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

84423 US Hwy. 87, Lewistown, MT
59457-2058

Tel: 406-538-3465

Office Hours: 7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. M-Th.

Website: www.ferguselectric.coop

E-mail: ferguselectric@ferguselectric.coop

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ferguselectric

Carson Sweeney.....General Manager
Dale Rikala..... Line Superintendent
Sally Horacek Office Manager
Janine Rife Didier Editor

Fergus Electric is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

District 1: Paul Descheemaeker, President, Lewistown, 428-2417
District 2: Brett Maxwell, Lewistown, 538-9002
District 3: Brad Arntzen, Hilger, 462-5555
District 4: Cathy Kombol, Roundup, 428-2202
District 5: Terry Frost, Vice President, Roundup, 323-3415
District 6: Jason Swanz, Sec./Treas., Judith Gap, 473-2462
District 7: Bob Evans, Jr., Geysers, 735-4476

Fergus Features is an award-winning newsletter.