

Great Falls Rising

Monthly Newsletter

May 2023

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

It has been observed in the U.S. since 1949. This year's theme is "**More Than Enough.**" It's an opportunity for all of us to come together and remember the inherent value we each hold, no matter our diagnosis, appearance, socioeconomic status, background or ability. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) reports that one in five U.S. adults experience mental illness each year and less than half of them receive treatment. Approximately 55% of U.S. counties do not have a single practicing psychiatrist. No matter what, you are inherently worthy of *more than enough* life, love and healing. If someone you love is going through a hard time, you don't need to have all the answers. Just being there is *more than enough*.

SAVE OUR GREAT FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY: Most of you have already seen the two billboards and the yard signs encouraging people to vote against the library levy. Great Falls Rising feels that our public library is the heart and soul of our community. It's a place where people feed their intellectual needs, enjoy good books and other literary materials, take their kids for story hour and choose books to take home, find camaraderie, enjoy lectures and presentations, hold meetings and for many it's where they can use computers for homework, etc. Honestly, what would a community be without its public library? Seriously faltering is what it would be. And how about "just" cutting back on all the services including how many days of the week it would be open.

The hope of Great Falls Rising is that all of you who read this WILL be voting for the Library Levy. So, let's start there. Now, please encourage your friends to support the levy and to pick up a sign for your yard. You can get them at

Cassiopeia Books or Luna Coffee Bar downtown. It's only by being proactive that we can squelch the anti-democracy, anti-library nonsense that has taken hold in Great Falls. The poll election will be held **June 6th**. Absentee ballots for the election go out **May 17th**.

AART DOLMAN, REMEMBERING HIS DEDICATION TO BOOKS: A great friend and supporter, Aart Dolman passed away nearly a year ago on May 16th, 2022. For several years, Aart held a book discussion prior to the Great Falls Rising gatherings that occurred on a monthly basis. Having grown up in the Netherlands and surviving the Nazi occupation of his homeland, Aart witnessed the banning and burning of books during that horrific time, and he treasured books until he died. He was a professor of history as well as fighting in combat in Korea as a US Army infantry soldier, later to become a non-commissioned officer.

To honor Aart's life work and service and his dedication to learning through books, Great Falls Rising is asking you to **vote for the library levy**, knowing that Aart would be fighting "tooth and nail" to preserve our/his Great Falls Public Library.

GFPS OPEN HOUSE: Join Great Falls Public Schools on **May 1st** for tours of the High Schools to celebrate the completion of the Bond projects. The **Great Falls High School** tour will be at **5:30 PM** at 1900 2nd Ave. South, and the **CMR High School** tour will be at **7:00 PM** at 228 17th Ave NW.

SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION INFORMATION: From the Cascade County Elections Office: 'Election is **Tuesday, May 2nd, 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM**. You may stop by the office anytime between **8:00 am and 5:00 pm on Monday** to cast your vote. We are located at 325 2nd Ave North in Room 100. We will move our office to Exhibition Hall at Montana Expo Park on election day on **May 2nd**. If you would like to receive your ballot during this time period, you will need to come over to the fairgrounds.'

Only those who registered to receive an absentee ballot received their ballot by mail for this election. If you did not receive a ballot, go to the Election Office on Monday or the polls at Expo Park on Tuesday. Remember, same day registration is available in the state of Montana if for some reason you dropped off the voter rolls. You can check your voter registration and ballot status here: [Voter Portal \(mt.gov\)](https://voterportal.mt.gov).

CITY OF GREAT FALLS 2024 BUDGET: An introduction to the 2024 budget process will take place on **Tuesday, May 2nd** at the City Commission Work Session, starting at **5:30 PM** in the Gibson Room at the Civic Center. The public is encouraged to attend.

END OF LEGISLATIVE SESSION: Big Sky 55+ is hosting the End of Session Virtual Town Hall *2023 Session: The Winners and Losers* Budget, Taxes, Constitution, Culture Wars, and more! Thursday, May 4th, 6:00 PM. Please join them on Thursday, **May 4th at 6:00 PM** for the final town hall, 2023 Session.

Please join Sen. Pat Flowers (Belgrade), Senate Minority Leader; Rep. Emma Kerr-Carpenter (Billings), member of House Appropriations completing her 3rd term in the House; and Rep. Jonathan Karlen (Missoula), freshman lawmaker and member of Business and Labor along with Big Sky 55+ Chair Terry Minow. Register for the event here: [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#).

FIGHT HUMAN TRAFFICKING: Learn how to identify, report and fight human trafficking. On **May 10th, from 5:30 to 7:30 PM**, Penny Ronning will be presenting on both sex and labor trafficking. The event is being held at the University of Providence, 1301 20th St. South. The FREE event is presented by Opportunities, Inc. and Junior League of Great Falls. It is open to the public and refreshments will be provided.

The daughter of a trafficking survivor, Penny learned early in life how trauma impacts families. In 2016, she co-founded the YCA Human Trafficking Task

Force, the largest such task force in Montana. She has co-authored legislation strengthening laws against violent crimes, successfully increased funding to enhance law enforcement investigation of sexual exploitation crimes and led on the creation and passage of a Billings, Montana, ordinance which effectively shut down the largest number of illicit massage businesses in Montana. Penny represented Montana at the 2020 White House Summit on Human Trafficking, and, under her leadership, in 2022, the YCA Human Trafficking Task Force was recognized nationally as a recipient of the prestigious FBI Director's Community Leadership Award.

OPPOSING HATE: A Community Guide for Opposing Hate, a publication of the Bard Center for the Study of Hate, Western States Center, and the Montana Human Rights Network, is well worth reading. The purpose of the manual is to provide those who want to “do something” about hate. There is something they can do, step by step, not only for the immediate aftermath of a hateful act, but for years to come to improve their community. Find the manual here: [OpposingHateGuide-single-pages-8M-5-3.pdf \(bard.edu\)](https://www.bard.edu/opposing-hate-guide-single-pages-8M-5-3.pdf).

LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN: The 2023 Great Falls Area Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) provides an opportunity to respond to the changing needs and interests of the community, plan for emerging transportation technologies, advance national, state, and local initiatives, and prepare Great Falls for future transportation funding opportunities. The previous LRTP was completed in 2018 and amended in 2019. Although much of the information still holds true today, the transportation system and community's needs are ever changing.

To kick off the planning effort, they have launched a [survey](#) focused on understanding the community's travel habits and transportation priorities. The survey should only take you 5 to 10 minutes and will help them plan for the future of transportation in Great Falls. Please share your input by **May 10th**. A draft plan is anticipated to be available by Fall 2023.

GFPS GRADUATION DATES: All ceremonies are at the Four Seasons Arena at Expo Park:

Paris Gibson Education Center - **May 26th at 6:30 PM**

Great Falls High School - **May 28th at 2:00 PM**

CM Russell High School - **May 28th at 6:00 PM**

MEMORIAL DAY: The Memorial Day ceremony at the Montana Veterans Memorial, 84-90 Pasta Plaza, will be held on **May 29th at 2:00 PM**. The Montana Veterans Memorial Association has a website where you can search for a tile, follow their events, learn about the organization, and view memorial photographs and video. Go to montanaveteransmemorial.org.

CITY OF GREAT FALLS BOARD OPENINGS: Would you like to be more involved in our city? Consider applying for one of the openings on a city advisory board. You can find information on the openings here: [Current Board and Commission Openings | City of Great Falls Montana \(greatfallsmt.net\)](http://greatfallsmt.net).

Don't forget to check out [KGPR Radio | The Electron at KGPR.ORG](http://kgpr.org) for other events happening in our community.