



## Harlow Bison Ranch and Tree Farm: Celebrating 75 Years

By Melinda Anakalea

My first memory of Tree Farm is just horrible. There was screaming and yelling and tears. I cried myself to sleep after they all loaded into their trucks wearing fancy Tree Farm wind breakers. They went off toward the creek to tour our forest. My older sister got to go, but I was four. It was raining and it was nap time, so I had to stay with Grandma despite my extreme protest.

The Harlow Ranch was established in 1919 when my great-grandfather bought 1,200 acres in Thompson Falls, MT. His oldest son, Max Harlow, helped to build the ranch house out of logs from the ranch, and the rest of the family moved there when it was completed in 1920. Max went off to college and the other two sons, Dell and Paul, raised sheep at the ranch until the huge market crash of 1929. Dell moved to Missoula after that, but my grandpa stuck it out with

some logging, some sheep, and then a dairy and milk delivery business.

My grandpa, Paul Harlow, joined Tree Farm in 1945. He had been logging this ranch since he was 16 years old and was interested in the timber industry and forestry. He was excited to be one of the first 50 to join Montana Tree Farm. Most of the other early members were industry and business—he was one of the first private forest owners.

My father, Arthur Harlow, was about 10 when Grandpa joined Tree Farm. He always thought it was a worthwhile organization, so he kept the ranch in the Tree Farm System and expanded the acreage to include more forest. Together they set up a beautiful old-growth legacy forest of approximately 1,000 acres.

The entire ranch is about 2,200 acres including the forest and the pasture. When Grandpa retired, Dad

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## MARY NAEGELI MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Each year the Montana Tree Farm System recognizes a deserving college student with an interest in forestry and who is a resident of Montana with an academic scholarship. At the 2017 Montana Annual Meeting, the membership unanimously approved a recommendation to name the scholarship the Mary Naegeli Memorial Scholarship after longtime Tree Farm member Mary Naegeli. Would you be willing to support the Montana Tree Farm System by contributing to the Mary Naegeli Memorial Scholarship?

Mary Naegeli, a long-time Montana Tree Farmer, former steering committee member, and strong advocate for long-term land stewardship poses with her son Bill proudly displaying her Forest Stewardship sign.

YES, I would like to show my support in promoting the Tree Farm System by contributing to the Mary Naegeli Memorial Scholarship.

I have included a donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Please make your check payable to Montana Tree Farm System and return it with this slip to:

Montana Tree Farm System, Inc.  
P.O. Box 17276  
Missoula, MT 59808

The Montana Tree Farm System is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization, and donations are tax deductible.

# Letter from the Chair

Holly McKenzie, Chair, Montana Tree Farm Program

As we approach the end of our warm summer and move into the cool crisp days of fall, I feel we are all breathing a sigh of relief at resuming some normalcy after a chaotic year. I felt a sense of loss when we didn't meet with our Tree Farmers in October of 2020, and it seems like a long time since we have seen one another. In this newsletter, we have included the registration for our Annual Fall Tree Farm Tour, which will take place in Clancy, Montana, near Helena. Skyler Hoefer, our Chair-Elect for Montana Tree Farm System, has been working hard to organize a great fall meeting where we will once again join fellow family forest owners to swap information and pride in our Montana forestland.

Please try to join us for two Tree Farm tours on the Wilson and McKelvey properties and enjoy a great lunch. This is always a fun time!

In this issue of the newsletter, you will find an article about prescribed fire and the benefits to the landscape. We hope to offer a series of articles about the historic value of fire on the landscape, as well as how we might enhance mechanical thinning with fire to address the associated fuels. In recent meetings, the Montana Forest Action Council has addressed the concept of including the use of fire as one of many tools to treat "5 million high-priority acres" identified across the state. Keep your eyes peeled for 14 forest health projects being implemented through grant-funded efforts in Montana.

There is also a new Tree Farm Peer Network being piloted in our state. This coordinated effort is currently led by Jane Mandala, a Missoula Tree Farmer, and Parks Brigman, the Western Regional Tree Farm Manager for the American Forest Foundation. Jane will introduce Peer Mentoring in this issue and how we hope to build capacity in Montana.

This is a wonderful time of year to get out and see some of Montana that you don't often get to visit. Pull up a map and go check out a new forest where you are guaranteed to have a great day and see something new. Many changes are taking place as higher log prices make it affordable to treat marginal timberlands to some thinning and breathing room for crowded trees. There are some fantastic efforts being made with cross-boundary projects to thin federal, private, tribal, and state acres with grant incentives from coordinated agencies like Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) or the

NRCS Targeted Implementation Projects (TIPs).

Everywhere I look there are fuel mitigation projects, forest restoration efforts, and good old-fashioned timber sales taking place and breathing life into acres of stagnant, overly crowded, or beetle-infested trees. I'm more encouraged than ever at the work being done on all levels to address the backlog of neglected forest health issues in Montana. Now is the time, and hopefully our efforts result in fire-resilient communities with healthy economies!

*Holly*

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## 2021 Tree Farm Steering Committee Members

- Chair: Holly McKenzie, Columbia Falls
- Vice Chair: Skyler Hoefer, Saint Regis
- Past Chair and Awards: Allen Chrisman, Polebridge
- Treasurer: Elizabeth "Betty" Kuropat, Yaak Valley
- Secretary & Administrative Assistant:  
Jane Mandala, Missoula
- Peer Network Coordinator: Jane Mandala, Missoula
- American Forest Foundation Western Regional  
Manager Tree Farm: Parks Brigman, Black Hills, SD
- Jim Costamagna, Bonner
- Scott Kuehn, Missoula
- Ed Levert, Libby
- Pat Mandzak, Lewiston, Idaho & Nine Mile  
Tree Farm
- Pat McKelvey, Clancy
- Joe Moran, Drummond
- Deb Parker-Foley, Missoula
- Cindy Peterson, Missoula
- Peter Pocius, Helena
- Tye Sundt, Kalispell
- Ali Ulwelling, Kalispell
- Jim Watson, Kalispell
- Erik Warrington, Missoula
- Jeff Whitlock, Columbia Falls

continued from page 1: Harlow Tree Farm ran cattle for several years and then leased the place to cattle ranchers. He has always maintained control of the logging operations and the forest health. He focused predominantly on removing the “dead, dying, and white fir.” He also put a conservation easement on the ranch so that it cannot be subdivided or logged in a manner contrary to Tree Farm principles.

After my first Tree Farm experience, you can imagine my delight when my dad invited my husband, Adam Anakalea, and me to the Tree Farm meeting in Thompson Falls in 2018. What a treat to be included in such a wonderful family tradition!

In 2019 we took the MSU Extension Forest Stewardship class, made a forest plan, and met with our DNRC service forester to complete the Tree Farm inspection. We were hooked! After moving to the ranch in July of 2019, Adam started doing some logging. We started a logging business and took all the necessary classes to be a part of the Accredited Logger Program with the Montana Logging Association. Our goal is to have the healthiest forest possible while maintaining good wildlife habitat and promoting regeneration.

In 2020 we added bison to the ranch. You can see pictures and read more about that at [www.harlowranch.com](http://www.harlowranch.com).

Right now, our forest is under attack from the Scolytus (fir engraver) beetle on the grand fir, and the Douglas-fir beetle is coming in fast. We are scurrying to get the blowdowns cleaned up from that epic

January storm so that they do not attract more beetles. Over 200 trees went down in that storm.

My dad survived the big pine beetle outbreak of the 1990s and he learned to manage for insects and disease. Now we are learning how to keep the forest of the 2020s healthy and to manage these fir beetles. We can't wait to get our kids to those Tree Farm meetings and Forest Stewardship classes and prepare them for the forest in their future. ♦



## DENNIS SWIFT MEMORIAL Tree Farm Inspector Recognition Award

Each year the Montana Tree Farm System recognizes the top Tree Farm Inspectors at the annual meeting. Many Montana Tree Farm Inspectors volunteer their time, equipment and vehicle use in promoting the Tree Farm System through their certification and inspection activity. Are you willing to support Montana Tree Farm Inspectors by contributing to the Dennis Swift Inspector Recognition Award?

YES, I would like to show my support in recognizing the importance of our Montana Tree Farm Inspectors in promoting the Tree Farm Program by contributing to the Dennis Swift Inspector Recognition Award.

I have included a donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Please make your check payable to Montana Tree Farm System and return it with this slip to:

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P.O. Box 17276  
Missoula, MT 59808

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Forest landowners and neighbors of Tree Farmer Melinda Anakalea (Thompson Falls) gathered in July to learn more about forest health and wildfire.

## Cultivating Connection: MTFS Peer Network

By Jane Mandala

If you're a member of the Montana Tree Farm System, chances are good that you know the importance of active and sustainable forest management. You may have taken advantage of a state or federal grant to reduce hazardous fuels on your property, or maybe you've harvested some acreage for income or to offset costs of other projects. Perhaps you've experienced beetle kill or root rot, or had an infestation of invasive weeds that needed treating. How did you know what to do? Who did you turn to for help? Maybe you took advantage of the thoroughly informative Forest Stewardship Workshops put on by MSU Extension Forestry, or you called your local DNRC service forester for assistance. Maybe you learned about forest management from parents or grandparents or family members, or through your own research, hard work, and trial and error. But what if you just moved to Montana? What if you inherited property, live out of state, or just have no idea where to start? How do you know what you don't know? These are some of the obstacles facing Montana's forest landowners, a population that has grown considerably since the onset of the pandemic. Montana Tree Farm has always served to connect its members with technical

resources, and now we are tapping our members to be a resource for others in the form of a Peer Network. The goal of this pilot program is to expand landowner engagement in the state's northwest corner. Nearly 40 Tree Farmers in Sanders, Lincoln, and Flathead Counties have volunteered to mentor other landowners, to serve as ambassadors of good forest stewardship, and to help spread the word about resources available in their area. Whether hosting an educational field day, visiting with a neighbor who has questions, or simply sharing experiences over a plate of BBQ, Tree Farmers are a trusted and approachable source of information and knowledge. We hope to spark the interest of landowners who are just beginning their adventure in forest management and nudge them toward taking that next step. Signing up for that workshop. Calling their service forester. Tackling that patch of knapweed. Maybe even cutting down a tree or two, and opening up their forest to the possibilities of a healthy, resilient landscape. ♦

*If you'd like more information or are interested in joining this network, please contact Jane at [jlsmandala@gmail.com](mailto:jlsmandala@gmail.com) or 406-274-2030.*

# Attention all Tree Farm Members!

We need your vote at the Annual Meeting or by mail to update a clause in our Montana Tree Farm Steering Committee Bylaws

Currently, our bylaws are worded as follows:

## Section 1: Qualifications for Steering Committee Membership

Any non-industrial private forester owner whose forest is currently certified by the Montana Tree Farm System, an industry forester, a consulting forester, or a representative of a state or federal agency directly involved in forestry, is eligible for membership on the Montana Tree Farm Steering Committee.

Last year, our steering committee discussed including conservation or land trust organizations to serve on our steering committee and increase our knowledge and Tree Farmer knowledge about opportunities to conserve larger forested tracts in perpetuity. We propose adopting the following changes in our bylaws to 1) invite conservation and land trust organizations to serve on our steering committee in the future, and 2) correct a typographical error (“forest owner” instead of “forester owner”).

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If you will not be at the annual meeting, please mail your response and any updated contact information to: P.O. Box 17276, Missoula, MT 59808 or e-mail it to [MontanaTreeFarm@gmail.org](mailto:MontanaTreeFarm@gmail.org).

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I approve this change to Section 1

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I do not support a change

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

As needed:

Please update my e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please change my phone number or add this cell number: \_\_\_\_\_

My mailing address has changed since my last inspection: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## You're Invited!

Montana Tree Farm's Steering Committee cordially invites you to join the statewide Annual Tree Farm Meeting. The event kicks off with coffee and pastries at Mark's Lumber, followed by two Tree Farm field tours. Transportation will be provided. The tours will be followed by lunch, a silent auction, and a short business meeting.

**Tree Farm Annual Meeting**  
**Saturday, October 2, 2021**  
**8:00 am to 2:30 pm at Mark's Lumber**  
**15 Lump Gulch in Clancy, Montana, 8 miles south of Helena!**

To register, simply fill out the form below.  
Mail the form along with a check for registration to:

Montana Tree Farm System  
PO Box 17276  
Missoula, MT 59808  
For questions, please contact Skyler at 406-830-0814 or [skyler.hoefer@IFG.com](mailto:skyler.hoefer@IFG.com)

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**Montana Tree Farm Annual Meeting Registration Form**  
**Saturday, October 2, 2021**

\$30.00 per adult—\$15.00 per youth ages 6 to 18—kids under 6 free!  
Registration Form due to Montana Tree Farm by September 20th.  
Attendance limited to 100. Pre-registration required.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ # of kids \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Lunch will include Montana meatloaf, garlic parmesan mashed potatoes, vegetarian salad bar, dessert, and beverages. Catered meal will be served in Mark's Lumber Planer Building.

Number of persons attending with Meatloaf option: \_\_\_\_\_ Vegetarian option: \_\_\_\_\_

Total amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\*If tour is filled, late applicants will be notified as soon as possible.

# Montana's 2nd Annual Women in the Woods Workshop

By Angela Wells and Holly McKenzie

Running a chainsaw takes skill and dedication to safety, but as women attending Montana's Women in the Woods workshop learned, the key to safe and effective operation has more to do with body position and the right equipment than brute strength. Pictured here, two participants take advantage of a break to practice using correct body position and mechanics to engage and disengage their chain brake (saws are not on!).

A fun group of 28 women and 10 presenters gathered at Lubrecht Experimental Forest, owned by the University of Montana, in late May. This workshop lasted two days, and there were options for overnight accommodations and lodging on site. Along with the chainsaw safety presentation, there were a wide variety of topics covered, including Introduction to Fire, Forest Insects and Disease, Forest Products & Markets, Home Ignition Zones, Fire-Adapted Forests, Tree Selection for Thinning Your Forest, and Chainsaw Practice with Felling, Bucking, and Pruning/Limbing Safety. The workshop was made possible through sponsorship and volunteers from the Montana Department of Natural Resources (DNRC), Montana Tree Farm System, Society of American Foresters, and the U.S. Forest Service Fire Lab.

We also toured a fire surrogate study that happened 20 years ago. In this study, the workshop participants were able to view the results of a crowded forest where thinning and prescribed fire were applied; directly adjacent was an example of a crowded forest that was

only burned, and another that was only thinned. This exciting learning opportunity took place during a snowstorm that blew in and surprised us all in late May...very exciting! Just goes to show that you have to be ready for all weather types in the spring.

During our last meal together, Joyce Murphy and Cindy Super gave a talk about a prescribed fire on Joyce's forestland in Lincoln, Montana. Cindy Super works for the Blackfoot Challenge, a conservation organization that focuses on maintaining healthy watersheds, healthy forests, and rangeland with historic lifestyles in the Blackfoot Valley of Montana. The Blackfoot Challenge helped provide the technical expertise and some grant funding to make prescribed burning a possibility for Joyce to use on her private forestland. This was an excellent opportunity to ask questions about the positive outcome of the fire, the liability and risks of using fire, and the historic use of fire on the landscape.

Interestingly enough, women will likely make the final land use decisions. In the U.S., women tend to outlive men, with a life expectancy of 81.2 years, while men live 76.4 years on average. This means that it is likely that final land use decisions, including selling or dividing land, will be made by women (Butler et al., 2017), underlining the need to engage this audience. See the Sustaining Family Forests Initiative (2018) and learn more at [www.womenowningwoodlands.net](http://www.womenowningwoodlands.net) and [www.engaginglandowners.org](http://www.engaginglandowners.org). ♦





# To Burn or Not to Burn?

By Dave Atkins

For me, the answer was easy: Yes! Making it happen was not! My wife and I own 159 acres in the lower Blackfoot drainage that we bought at the end of 2015. As a forester and forest ecologist, it has been a dream come true to own and manage my own forest. I had the privilege to help manage public lands for over 37 years, so I have been around fire (I fought my first wildfire in 1976), harvesting and tending forests all my adult life.

I knew I wanted to take advantage of the many benefits of using fire, but on my terms, rather than waiting for fire to show up some hot August day with the wind driving a wildfire across our land and a 30,000-foot column of smoke mushrooming into the sky. While I know the treatments on my little piece of the world by itself will not change that mushroom cloud of smoke, I also know that by working with neighbors, public and private, we can change the behavior, intensity, and effects of that wildfire. I know if I manage smartly and cooperatively, the likelihood of my forest and cabin being intact are much greater—and I can enhance wildlife habitat for the elk, deer, bears, birds, wolves, and more that share our land, as well as protect the wonderful place my kids and grandkids like to hike, berry pick, hunt, star gaze, ski, mountain bike, and snowshoe while also growing trees that will provide timber and income someday.

Simple, eh? Well not exactly. The land we bought had been in corporate ownership for most of the previous 120+ years. We obtained a good road network, and though it had been harvested multiple times in that time frame, it still had some medium-sized trees of desirable species to work with. The biggest issue was way too many sapling- to pole-sized trees. These create ladder fuels for a wildfire, which would likely be severe when it showed up; it also created risk for bark beetle or defoliating insect attacks. The last evidence of fire on the land appears to be 1918, but old stumps tell the story of relatively frequent fires prior to that through the fire scars recorded on those trees.

Our land is mostly steep ground, which adds to the complexity and cost of management. Only about 25% can be operated on with excavators, skidders, and similar ground-based equipment versus cable or “zip-line” kinds of equipment needed for steep land.



Typical tree density prior to the beginning of any treatments on the property.

Unlike when I worked on public lands, where fire engines, hoses, pumps, and crews were at the ready to build fire lines, thin out the thickets of trees, pile and burn the excess, and do the lighting and holding when we conducted the burn, I had myself, a son-in-law, and a few neighbors willing to help me burn. But not nearly enough to pull off a 45-acre burn. So I had to find some ways to mitigate the risk of an escaped fire. This meant I needed to hire loggers and hand-thinning crews to reduce the density of those ladder fuel trees, and then I needed people with engines and know-how to conduct a burn. This would allow me to achieve my ultimate desired condition of a more open forest with a mixture of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir. It took several years to accomplish.

I wanted to keep most of the medium-sized trees and thin lots of the smaller trees. We are fortunate to have the Willis Enterprise company just down the road, which makes clean chips for pulp, so we had a market for the majority of trees that weren't big enough to make a sawlog. But that value wasn't enough to cover all that deferred forest tending for the last century. Luckily, the Blackfoot Challenge, a collaborative organization, manages a grant program to help reduce wildfire risk. The fact that we have 75 homes within a quarter to a half mile of our property meant we fit their criteria, and then we partnered with The Nature Conservancy, which owns land on three sides of us, and the neighbor on the fourth side to hire a skilled logger to thin, pile, and burn over 300 acres in total, through a cost-share program with the MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. Some of the lands were immediately adjacent to the homes in the area.

Now we were finally ready to conduct an underburn. Why, you ask, when we had already piled and burned? For several reasons: we wanted to kill back the shrubs to enhance wildlife browse; we wanted to clean up the fine fuels that you can't effectively get with the excavator, the leaf litter that accumulates around the base of the serviceberry, cherry, and other shrubs; the needles and bark that accumulate around the base of the trees that can burn in a wildfire hot enough to heat girdle the roots and base of the tree

even though the flames never get into the tops. In addition, over the course of a century there are a lot of trees that die and fall, and the forest accumulates old material that can provide concentrations of branches and stems ¼" to 3" in diameter, the material that can really feed a raging wildfire. Another desirable effect is that the heat of the underburn will also kill the lower branches of some of the trees, which raises the height of the live tree canopy, further protecting those trees when a wildfire shows up.



The heat of the underburn killed some of the lower branches and small trees, making it harder for a wildfire to get into the crowns of the trees. The picture also shows the regrowth of shrubs and forbs less than three months after the burn.



Looking at the soil around the base of the tree, you can see where the litter and duff were consumed in the burn, thus reducing the likelihood of heat-girdling the tree in a wildfire.

The last purpose on the list, but certainly not in value, is preparing a good seed bed for regenerating ponderosa pines. I knew I would get Douglas-fir regeneration, but I want a good mixture of both. I have root rot fungi that preferentially kill the Douglas-fir, so having more pine in the mix can reduce mortality of the root rots.

Of course, I needed to get firelines installed to contain the planned burn. I used my small tractor/backhoe across the ridgetop, but the sides of the unit were too steep and needed to be built by hand. I contracted with Grayback Forestry to get that done.

Getting the right burn window when it is dry enough to consume the fuels I wanted to eliminate, but not too dry to have it get out of control, requires the right combination of fuel moisture content, temperature, humidity, and wind speeds. It also means

you have the people and equipment available when the combination of conditions is good. We went through two springs and two falls before we got the right combination of all the conditions. A year ago it looked like we were good to go, and then the day we were to burn we had the people and equipment on site but the weather forecast didn't come through. It was not hot and dry enough. We conducted a test fire, but it just wouldn't spread and sustain the fire.

Finally, this past April 17th, the dry spring gave us low fuel moistures and temperatures in the mid to high 60's. I had three different contractors help supply staff and equipment, plus several friends and family for a total of 21 people. Eight were on the lighting crew, using drip torches, dropping a mix of diesel and gas to start the fire in strips, and the rest were part of the holding crew to jump on any spots that crossed the lines. We started at 11:30 a.m., when it was 58 degrees and 34% humidity with only 2-5 mph winds, and we needed to use a fair amount of fuel in our strips to get it to carry well. We were fortunate to have a good breeze of 8-15 mph develop about an hour into lighting, which helped push the fire along. At the top/start, we had to nurse the fire along. By

5:30 p.m., the temperature was 67 and the humidity was down to 18%, and we needed to be careful to not light too much too quickly; the fire was spreading nicely, but I wanted some saplings and pole-sized trees to survive, and too much heat will scorch-kill them. It is a challenging balance to meet all these different goals, and you must be realistic in your expectations. Sometimes you get too much, sometimes not enough, and sometimes just right (i.e., Goldilocks).

I was very pleased that we achieved Goldilocks over most of the 45 acres with a small amount of too much and too little. The three seasons of attempted burns were worth the wait. We already have elk and moose browsing the re-sprouting shrubs.

We are building a small cabin on our land for our regular "getaways" and looking forward to that cozy wood stove heat in the winter when we are skiing or snowshoeing. Working with fire, a process that has shaped our forests for eons and was a primary tool for Native Americans to manage their landscape, is very satisfying. Our cabin will have lumber from our land in it. Stop by sometime, and we can have a cold drink on the deck and discuss the next burn that needs to get done! ♦



Active flames burning along the ground during the planned burn, consuming the fine fuels.

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## Silent Auction Donation

Once again, a silent auction will be held during this year's annual meeting. It's an important event not only for the entertainment value, especially during the live auction of homemade pies, but also because all proceeds go directly to help defray costs for buses, refreshments, snacks, catering, and the facility. Members may not be aware that their registration fee only partially covers expenses.

There is still time to bake, make, craft, construct, sew, or scrounge something to donate! And, since an item does not have to be new, dust it off and bring it. For inspiration, think baked goods, jams and jellies, placemats/napkins, handmade jewelry, themed gift baskets, bird houses/feeders, furniture, forestry/outdoor/nature books, artwork, fishing/hunting items, pruning tools, and produce. Yard/estate sales, garages/attics, after-season clearance items in sporting goods stores are all fair game.

Want to donate but unable to attend? No problem. We can arrange for a pick-up.

Remember, donations not only help the cause, but are also tax deductible. So, don't forget your checkbook, as we only take cash and checks. Contact Pat Mandzak at [Mandzak@aol.com](mailto:Mandzak@aol.com) or (208) 859-5490 with donations and/or questions.