

COPPER KING HOTEL

TATTOO RENDEZVOUS



MEGAN NIELSEN PHOTOS, MONTANA STANDARD

Hannah Moorman, a tattoo artist at Neon Rodeo in Missoula, places a tattoo design on Adrienne Cash, of Bozeman, at the Montana Tattoo and Western Arts Rendezvous at The Copper King Hotel and Convention Center in Butte on May 23.

100+ artists gather in Butte for first Montana Tattoo and Western Arts Rendezvous

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Tattoo guns hummed, flash sheets were flipped through and artists cooked up designs while waiting for clients.

The Copper King Hotel and Convention Center was abuzz with over 100 tattoo artists who came from across the country for the very first Montana Tattoo and Western Arts Rendezvous.

"Butte is showing up," said Nate Drew, one of the event's organizers.

Drew, who works as an artist out of Lost Art Tattoo in Salt Lake City, and co-organizer Thad Robison have for several years put on the Salt Lake City Tattoo Expo.

When Drew moved to Wolf Creek, he said he kind of fell in love with Butte. So the organizers decided to try hosting an event in Butte, with a focus on bringing out Montana artists.

"Butte is the center of the spoke of the wagon wheel of Montana," Drew said.

Whitefish-based tattoo artist Thomas Titus hand-painted the design for the poster and merchandise sold at the event. In addition to tattooing, art for sale ranged

from earrings made from scavenged bones to fine art prints from Bozeman-based artist Emily Gonzales' "The Brave One?" tarot deck series, a project focused on conjuring the spirit of Indigenous people from the past.

Being able to bring artists from all over Montana and the country to Butte's backyard is a big reason for attendees to come out to the event, according to Drew.

Artist information and booking was available ahead of the event, and some artists came into the weekend fully booked. Artists took walk-ins based on availability; most artists enjoy doing so, according to Cristine Lewis, who helps manage volunteers at the Salt Lake expo.

"Several of the artists came with material specific to the area," said Lewis as she talked about flash sheets drawn up specifically to cater to walk-ins for the weekend's event.

"I think it really ups the game here in Montana, because there's some great artists in Montana that a lot of people haven't heard about," said Drew.

Megan Nielsen is a photographer for the Montana Standard newspaper.



James Shepherd, a tattoo artist based out of Texas, tattoos Dustin Spyke, of Livingston, at the Montana Tattoo and Western Arts Rendezvous at The Copper King Hotel and Convention Center in Butte on May 23.

Dude ranch seeks water authority for golf course

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A private dude ranch that unlawfully watered its 18-hole golf course in 2024 is now petitioning the District Court in Park County to have "exclusive authority" to operate a ditch used to water the course.

"No other water users have rights conveyed in the Upper Criswell Ditch, so granting CMR exclusive authority to operate the headgate will not affect any other water users," the Crazy Mountain Ranch's water attorney, Peter Scott, wrote in the request filed on April 20.

Scott is also asking the court to lift a stay issued last July amid a disagreement with the state and for the judge to provide instructions to limit the water commissioner authority this irrigation season.

Water commissioners are court-appointed to lawfully distribute water when there have been disputes among water users.

Hearing set for June 3

A hearing has been set for June 3 at 1 p.m. in Livingston despite veteran water commissioner Russ Sarrazin's attorney arguing the ranch's request was premature.

"It is no secret to this Court that tensions have been high between local water users and the CMR and there is little trust between the parties," wrote Bozeman attorney Breeann Johnson, who is representing Sarrazin, in her reply to the complaint.

"Some of this distrust is justifiable given CMR's history of illegal water use from Rock Creek and elsewhere," Johnson said, adding that full transparency would help rebuild trust between the parties making it even more important the ranch be treated like any other Rock Creek water user.

Johnson also called Crazy Mountain Ranch's request for exclusive authority an "extraordinary remedy" and an overreach.

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Auditor proposes stricter bond agent rules

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After two bail bond agents on temporary licenses were charged with involvement in a fatal shooting in Missoula in March, the Montana commissioner of securities and insurance is proposing stricter, clearer rules around bond agent certification and supervision.

The new rules, proposed Friday, will prevent any bond agent on a temporary license from apprehending someone without a fully licensed agent present.

"We are grateful for the opportunity to further safeguard Montanans through a commonsense rule change that will help ensure that inexperienced agents are not engaging in serious situations — unsupervised — where lethal force can be administered," Tyler Newcombe, the commissioner's office spokesperson said in an emailed statement.

According to charging documents, on March 4, four bail bond agents from Mr. Bail, a bail service headquartered in Billings, were in Missoula to apprehend Joshua Wykle. Prosecutors alleged that one of these agents, Brandon Wakefield, fatally shot the victim. He has been charged with deliberate homicide. Another of the agents, Austin Mistretta, has been charged with attempted assault.

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