



# The City Link

Official News and Information  
from the City of Billings

Billings Pride:  
City-wide

Summer 2009

## Energy-Efficiency-and-Conservation Funding Sought

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act authorized funding to local governments for projects that will reduce total energy use and fossil fuel emissions, while stimulating the economy.

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant entitles the City of Billings to \$1,003,000 for projects that accomplish energy savings. The City requested funding for five projects. City Council also adopted an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy aimed at providing long term, community-wide benefits as part of the grant application. The Strategy sets out three measurable goals:

**Goal 1: 15 by 15:** Establish baseline energy use information for all City facilities and participating private facilities, and reduce 2009 energy levels 15 percent by 2015.

**Goal 2: 10 in 10:** Reduce the total fossil fuel consumption by adding 10 miles of multi-purpose pathways, bike lanes, and sidewalks, and increasing transit ridership 10 percent in 10 years.

**Goal 3: 25 by 25:** Replace 25 percent of internal combustible engines in City-owned equipment and

vehicles with energy efficient alternatives by 2025.

Each of the five projects submitted implements at least one of these goals. City staff will find out whether these projects have been funded later this year. The projects include:

**1. 2009 International Energy Conservation Code Program Development** – A program to train and certify building safety officials and educate the building community in the new Energy Code. This project is expected to preserve at least one internal position and reduce energy consumption of new construction by 15 percent. The City is requesting \$100,000 for this project.

**2. Swords Park Trail II** – One mile of hard-surfaced, multi-purpose trail connecting the existing Swords Park Trail to the bicycle path along Aronson Boulevard. This trail section will complete an important 4-mile bicycle commuting route from the Billings Heights neighborhood to downtown Billings. The City is requesting \$400,000 to supplement available funds to complete this project.

**3. Energy Performance Audit for City-owned Facilities** – Hire an independent contractor to identify building improvements that will result in significant future energy savings through a Technical Audit at a cost of \$100,000. The cost of the energy-saving improvements will be funded by the guaranteed savings produced by the improvements projects.

**4. City Energy Star Challenge** – \$53,000 will be used to establish baseline energy use levels in public and participating private buildings and monitor the energy savings resulting from voluntary energy efficiency programs. The project includes a significant public awareness component, including a website with information on energy-saving tips and available financial assistance, and a community marketing campaign about the Energy Star Challenge and the ways in which people can become involved.

**5. Hybrid Bookmobile** - Replace the Parmly Billings Library Bookmobile, a 1995 Thomas-built vehicle powered by a Cummins 5.9 liter diesel engine, with a new bookmobile equipped with the integration of an Electric Hybrid Drive System and a Cummins 2010 EPA compliant diesel engine for \$350,000.

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Visit the City's Website: <http://www.ci.billings.mt.us>

# Are You a "Fan" of the City of Billings?

## City Launches New Pages on Facebook and Twitter!

In an effort to give citizens of all ages another avenue to stay in touch with and be involved in the City's government, the City of Billings has launched two new pages on the popular social networking websites, Facebook and Twitter.

To find the City on Facebook or Twitter, users can visit the City's official website and click the "Follow Billings on Facebook or Twitter" graphic located on the bottom left of the page. You can also search for "Billings, MT" on [www.Facebook.com](http://www.Facebook.com) or visit [www.twitter.com/BillingsMT](http://www.twitter.com/BillingsMT).

In less than two weeks since launching the new pages, the City has already gained a fan base of nearly 500 on Facebook and built a strong following on Twitter.

The City's Facebook and Twitter profiles feature the latest in City news, announcements and events. The City's Facebook page also provides links to online services, videos and other items of interest related to the various functions of the City.

With the help of CivicPlus, the company contracted to develop the City's official website, both profiles have been set to be automatically updated through RSS (Real Simple Syndication) feeds from the official website. This means every time the City's website is updated, so are the Facebook and Twitter profiles; resulting in no additional resources needed to maintain the two new pages.

The City of Billings encourages all of our residents to be our fans on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

Home | Calendar | Contact Us | Document Center | Print Page | Site Map | RSS

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Departments  
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Jobs  
Road Closures  
FAQs  
City Code

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City of Billings  
210 N. 27th St.  
Billings, MT 59101

THE CITY OF  
**BILLINGS, MONTANA**

About Billings | Your Government | City Services | For Residents | Doing Business

Welcome to Billings, Montana consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute inure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum nulla pariatur.

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News & Announcements View All

Upcoming Events View All

Nov. 1  
After 5 Mixer, Snow Country Clothing

Nov. 10  
Montana Virtuosos, Alberta Bair Theater

Nov. 23  
Holiday Parade, Downtown Parade Route

Star of the Big Sky Country

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### Mayor and City Council of Billings

Mayor Ron Tussing  
[tussingr@ci.billings.mt.us](mailto:tussingr@ci.billings.mt.us)  
657-8296

**WARD 1**  
Peggie Gahen  
[gahenp@ci.billings.mt.us](mailto:gahenp@ci.billings.mt.us)  
259-2926

Jim Ronquillo  
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245-5576

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Mailing Address:  
P.O. Box 1178  
Billings, MT 59103  
Street Address:  
210 North 27th Street  
Billings, MT 59101

### We Want to Hear From You

Please provide us with input for our next newsletter.

#### What did you like most about the newsletter?

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#### What would you like to see in upcoming newsletters?

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Mail or e-mail your comments to us at:

[citylink@ci.billings.mt.us](mailto:citylink@ci.billings.mt.us)  
The City Link  
P.O. Box 1178  
Billings, MT 59103

# Development Activity Still Slow as Mid Point in the Year Approaches

Construction activity in Billings has fared better than in many other areas of the state and country. Still, development activity in the community continues to significantly lag behind last year, and it is not clear when a significant increase in activity will begin.

The Planning Division is still experiencing about a 35 percent reduction in subdivision and zoning activity from 2008. Pre-application meetings

-- the conceptual meetings to review a subdivision proposal before it is officially submitted for review -- are down about 33 percent from last year at this point.

Pre-application meetings are a good indicator of future projects that will come through the review process, so the Division continues to monitor the number of these meetings closely. Zoning applications are also down in most areas, with applications for zone

changes and special use reviews in the City running at 50 percent or less of 2008 activity at this point in the year. Requests for land use variances in the City are the only zoning applications that are tracking about the same as 2008, with nine variance applications already submitted in 2009.

The Building Division is responsible for the permitting and inspection of all building construction within the city limits of Billings. While permits

are still flowing in and out of the Division, there is a definite decrease in activity from the previous year. For the first five months of 2009, a total of 530 permits have been issued. This compares with 601 permits for the same period in 2008.

Perhaps the most notable difference is the number of single family permits. In 2009 there have been 76 new home permits issued. In 2008 for the same five months that figure was

## From Our Readers

### Questions, Comments & Answers

#### Questions from Carolyn Crouch via email:

We find the CityLink newspaper very informational. We have only one complaint. We do not take the Gazette, so we don't receive it. I would suggest you put it in with the batch of flyers everyone receives that come out on Wednesday or Thursday. Thank you.

#### Answer:

City staff chose the quarterly date with the Gazette which would reach the most readers. Unfortunately, budget constraints do not allow this publication to be inserted more than once quarterly. However, the CityLink is also available on the City's website at [www.ci.billings.mt.us](http://www.ci.billings.mt.us) and extra copies are available at City Hall and other City facilities.

#### Comments and Questions an Anonymous reader via email:

Is there ever going to be another way in and out of the heights? The traffic is ridiculous!

#### Answer:

There are currently two projects planned that will help with traffic into and out of the Heights. The Inner Belt Loop project will build a completely new roadway north and west of the airport connecting Alkali Creek Road to Zimmerman Trail at Highway 3. This project will help to redirect traffic from the west side of

the Heights away from Main Street and provide a route for people going to and from the west end that does not require travel through the congested areas near Airport Road and Main. Design work has just started on the Inner Belt Loop. The start of actual construction will depend on availability of funding and the acquisition of the necessary right-of-way.

The other project currently underway is the 6th Avenue North/Bench Connection project. This project will construct a bridge over Alkali Creek to connect Main to Bench Boulevard. Due to funding availability, this project will be built in two phases. One phase will construct the bridge and the connector roadway across Alkali Creek. A separate phase will construct an underpass to bring 6th Avenue North (existing Metra exit) under Main Street. Design on a separate project has also begun that will improve the existing portion of Bench Boulevard north of the creek crossing.

Also, the Aronson project was completed last year and will be functioning as designed after completion of the Airport Road project. This project was intended to help traffic on the west side of Main Street in a similar fashion as the Bench connection will help on the east.

*Thanks for reading the CityLink and for sending in your great suggestions and comments!*

## City of Billings Increases Garbage Rates For First Time Since 1999

The City's solid waste rates will increase for the first time in more than 10 years to cover costs for providing household and commercial waste services. These services include trash collection and landfill operations.

The rates have held steady since 1999 at \$79 per year for residential services. Fees will be increased over a three-year period to \$86 per year beginning July 1, 2009; \$94 beginning July 1, 2011; and \$103 on July 1, 2012. The rate increases are included in the approved City budget. The fee increase is due to growth of the City requiring new routes, nearly \$530,000 of fuel price increases in the last four years, higher fleet maintenance costs and starting the yard waste recycling program.

In January 2009, the Bozeman Daily Chronicle reported, "Billings' residents pay the least for garbage services at \$6.58 per month for a 90-gallon bin. The tipping fee at the City's landfill also is among the lowest in the state, at \$11.50 per ton." Tipping fees are the weight of commercial garbage hauled and dumped at the City's landfill. Tipping fees per ton will also be increased over a three-year period to \$12.50 per ton in FY 2010, \$14 in FY 2011, and \$16 in FY 2012. While raising rates is a difficult decision, it is necessary to keep up with increased costs for the operation.

# 2009-Neighborhood-Task-Forces



*Photo courtesy of The Billings Gazette*



## Want More Information?

If you are interested in being part of a monthly organization that can make a difference in your neighborhood, either contact an officer from the list on the opposite page or simply come to the next meeting and be part of the solution!

## What Issues Are Dealt With at the Meetings?

Although the discussion covers a very wide range of topics, some of the recurring topics that Task Forces deal with include:

- Implementation of the Neighborhood Plan
- Neighborhood Crime and Vandalism
- Code Enforcement Issues
- Negligent Property Stewardship
- Neighborhood Stewardship
- Railroad Issues
- Traffic Concerns
- Housing Quality

## Task Force History

Some Billings area Neighborhood Task Forces have been in existence since the 1970s as a way for the residents of Billings to provide input to city government agencies on issues concerning their neigh-

borhoods. The Billings area Neighborhood Task Forces started with three original Task Forces created in Billings: South Side, North Park and Central-Terry Task Forces. From the beginning, the Task Forces have expanded and diversified their interests while pursuing their true main focus — to maintain, preserve, and improve the neighborhoods of Billings.

## What are Neighborhood Task Forces?

The Billings Neighborhood Task Forces are community-run organizations that were created by members of their neighborhoods to give their residents a chance to make a difference where they live. The groups regularly participate in such decisions as distribution of federal CDBG funds (for each task force community), proposed zone changes, code violations, and anything else that has the potential to effect the neighborhoods we call home.

## Who Can Attend These Monthly Meetings?

There is a continuous, open invitation to these

meetings for anyone and everyone residing in, operating a business or service organization in, or who is just concerned with the general betterment of these neighborhoods. Regular attendees include police officers and city and state government representatives, as well as residents of the task force areas.

## Why Should I Attend A Task Force Meeting?

Everyone residing in or having a business or service organization in our community has their own ideas on how to change this neighborhood for the better. These neighborhood meetings are where those ideas can begin to materialize and take shape. The more residents that participate in these meetings, the more ideas that could be presented and solutions suggested.

It is important to know that other people share in the same concerns about their neighborhoods.

*Participation is 100% Voluntary*

# Make a Difference!

# 2009-Neighborhood-Task-Force-Officers

## Central-Terry Park

Weldon Birdwell, Chairperson .....252-9711  
44 Yellowstone ..... [wjbii@attglobal.net](mailto:wjbii@attglobal.net)

Carina Meyer, Vice Chairperson .....655-8973  
930 Custer Avenue

Jean Neyrinck, Secretary

Central-Terry Task Force meets on the **2nd Thursday at 6:30 pm** of each month at Terry Park Fire Station, Terry Avenue and 5th Street West.

## West End Task Force

Dennis Ulvestad, Chairman .....651-1736  
[Uden621@aol.com](mailto:Uden621@aol.com)

Betty Brotzel, Secretary .....656-2278  
[muggs@bresnan.net](mailto:muggs@bresnan.net)

Inga Larsen, Treasurer

West End Task Force meets on the **3rd Tuesday at 7:00 pm** of each month at Faith Evangelical Church, 3145 Sweetwater Drive, Room 128 – NW Corner of Building. Use Main South Entrance.

## Heights Community Development

Ray Tracy, Chair [rtracymt@hotmail.com](mailto:rtracymt@hotmail.com)

Tom Zurbuchen, Co-Vice Chair

Wanda Grinde, Co-Vice Chair

Heights Task Force meets on the **4th Tuesday at 7:00 pm** of each month at Castlerock Middle School Library, 1441 Governor's Blvd (255-3819).

## North Elevation

Mike Tuss, Chairperson ..... 252-9364 / 248-7455  
1046 North 31st Street [miket@ctagroup.com](mailto:miket@ctagroup.com)

Shauna Kerr, Secretary ..... 252-5877 (after 5:00 pm)  
907 North 31st Street [skerrcumin@bresnan.net](mailto:skerrcumin@bresnan.net)

North Elevation Task Force meets on the **3rd Tuesday at 7:00 pm** as needed at McKinley School Gym, 820 North 31st Street.

## North Park

Erica Sparhawk, Vice-Chair [ericafulker@gmail.com](mailto:ericafulker@gmail.com)

Jeanette Vieg, Secretary [jvieg@hotmail.com](mailto:jvieg@hotmail.com)

Vacant, Treasurer

North Park Task Force meets on the **1st Thursday at 7:00 pm** of each month at the North Park Center.

## South Side

Mike Yakawich .....254-2445  
206 S 32 Street [familychurchmt@aol.com](mailto:familychurchmt@aol.com)

Marion Dozier, Vice-Chairperson

Mary Westwood, Secretary

Kathleen Candelaria, Treasurer

South Side Task Force meets on the **3rd Thursday at 7:00 pm** of each month at Friendship House, 3123 8th Avenue South.

## Southwest Corridor

Tom Ruschkewicz, Chair .....245-5762  
4125 Vaughn .....cell: 670-4395

Floyd Martin, Vice-Chair .....252-8809

Darlene Derkson, Treasurer

Barbara Prewitt, Secretary

Southwest Corridor Task Forces meets on the **4th Thursday at 7:00 pm** of each month at 80 Hallowell Lane.

# Auto Loans

## Now is a terrific time to buy a car.

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# Current Planning:

## Zoning, Subdivisions & Managing Development Every Day

Have you ever wondered how a corn field can transform seemingly overnight into a new housing development or business park? Or, maybe why your neighbor cannot have a commercial dog kennel or pig farm in his backyard. Two words: Current Planning.

The previous two issues of the City Link reviewed Long-Range Community Planning and Transportation Planning as two of the critical services your City-County Planning Department offers. While the previous topics deal with planning for the future, sometimes as much as 20 or more years ahead, Current Planning deals with more immediate land use issues in the community.

Through the subdivision process, new parcels of land called 'lots' are legally created so that the landowner may sell them for further

development. This process must follow state and local regulations and includes extensive analysis by local government as well as public hearings in certain instances.

Once lots are created, established zoning laws then regulate the use of that land so neighborhoods and the greater community can remain healthy, safe and vibrant. Zoning is a local tool to implement long-range growth plans and is meant to protect citizens from hazardous or nuisance situations. All properties within the City of Billings are assigned a zone. Some zones are limited to residential uses, while others allow varying commercial or industrial uses. Planning staff is always willing to help you decipher the subdivision and zoning laws and may be reached at (406) 657-8246.

### For more information visit the following websites:

- Subdivision information and regulations:  
[www.ci.billings.mt.us/subdivisions](http://www.ci.billings.mt.us/subdivisions)
- Zoning information and regulations:  
[www.ci.billings.mt.us/zoning](http://www.ci.billings.mt.us/zoning)
- Current applications in review at the Planning Department:  
[www.ci.billings.mt.us/currentplanningapplications](http://www.ci.billings.mt.us/currentplanningapplications)

The 2005 Billings Urban Area Transportation Plan is currently being updated. To review information regarding the 2005 Transportation and the update process please go to: [www.ci.billings.mt.us/transportationplanupdate](http://www.ci.billings.mt.us/transportationplanupdate) or call Lora Mattox, Transportation Planner at (406) 247-8622.

# Met Drivers Certified

MET Transit Paratransit Coordinator held a Passenger Service and Safety (PASS) training class for 24 paratransit and on-call drivers and the department dispatchers on April 14 and 15. The Paratransit Coordinator received extensive training and was certified as a PASS trainer in December of 2008.

The objective of the course was to identify disability diversities of people transported and to become familiar and proficient with customer assistance, sensitivity, and evacuation techniques. The training program consisted of basic information on various mobility aids, vehicle accessibility equipment, including wheelchair lifts and mobility aid securements, along with evacuation exercise on-board vehicles.

Hands-on demonstrations on the proper loading of clients using wheel-

chairs and securing electric and regular wheelchairs were given along with procedures on evacuation of a paratransit van in an emergency. Training was provided on the basic accident and emergency handling procedures which are remaining calm under stressful conditions, driver, passenger and vehicle protection, and notification and documentation procedures. This training will remind the drivers of the steps to take for a successful evacuation.

A special thanks goes to Scooters America for loaning an electric wheelchair and a scooter for use in role-playing exercises with the drivers.

Drivers successfully completing this class receive a three-year professional certification from The Community Transportation Association of America in Washington, DC.



## City of Billings Fuel Costs Drop by Nearly Half

The City of Billings purchased more than 250,000 gallons of fuel in the first four months of 2009 at an average price of \$1.55 per gallon. In 2008, the City spent an average of \$3.02 per gallon.

This demonstrates a savings of \$367,500 in just four months compared to last year. Because the City is a governmental and tax exempt entity, it does not pay the same taxes as are paid at the retail pump.

With fuel prices on the rise, it is expected that the cost savings will be less for the remainder of the year. However, if prices remain the same, the City could expect a total savings from 2008 to 2009 of \$1.1 million.

## City Surplus Property Auction

The City of Billings will be conducting its annual auction of surplus City items on Saturday, September 26, 2009, at the Billings Operation Center, located at 4848 Midland Road, Billings, MT 59101. Viewing of items will begin at 8:00 am the day of the auction, with the auction starting at 9:00 am.

Items auctioned off will include vehicles, miscellaneous equipment, office equipment, computers and electronics, and other miscellaneous items too numerous to mention. This annual auction is a way for the City to "recycle" still usable items within the community, while returning needed funds to the City coffers. Last year's auction raised over \$50,000 to offset costs of future purchases for participating departments.

For more information about the City's surplus property auction, please contact Liz Kampa-Weatherwax, Purchasing Agent, at (406) 657-8216 or via email at [kampal@ci.billings.mt.us](mailto:kampal@ci.billings.mt.us).

## Police Department Sees Younger Employees



The Billings Police Department has undergone some significant changes the past few years. The most significant of those changes is the transition to a department where 60 percent of the officers have 10 years experience or less. Of that 60 percent, half have five years of experience or less. It is exciting to have these new officers in the department, as they bring tireless energy and unique skill sets to the job.

Additionally, the department is now in a situation where "50-somethings" are managing "20-somethings." Currently, employees of the Police Department easily span three generations; Boomer (1945-1963), Diversity or Generation

X (1964-1981), and Millennial or Generation Y (1982-2003).

Police Department management is cognizant of a theory called, "you are now what you were then." This theory articulates that one cannot understand today's workers without understanding the social, political, economic, and cultural world in which they grew up (Massey).

So far, the key to success has been management's ability to be both a teacher and a student at the same time. Additionally, great emphasis is placed on organizational values before personal values. Times are exciting, but the best is yet to come.

## Don't be a stranger in your own city – We are all in this together!

*Community Conversations about the recent Billings Citizen Survey results will be held this fall in all areas of the City.*

Sept. 9, 10, 15 & 16 -- Locations to be determined and advertised.

For more information, please contact Bruce McCandless, Assistant City Administrator, at (406) 657-8222 or [mccandlessb@ci.billings.mt.us](mailto:mccandlessb@ci.billings.mt.us).

You may also visit the City of Billings website at [www.ci.billings.mt.us](http://www.ci.billings.mt.us).

*Hope to see you there!*

There is a lot of press these days about water conservation, particularly in relation to protecting the environment.

Wise use of water not only benefits the environment, but also saves money.

Treating and delivering water to homes requires huge amounts of electricity as does cleaning up wastewater before returning it to the Yellowstone River.

Electricity costs are a big factor in the rate charged for water. Inefficient use of water leads to a need for larger pipes and pumping systems which cost more than if Billings' water supply was used more efficiently. These extra costs

are passed on to customers through the water rates.

Wise water use does not mean trading away the benefits of a greenscape around homes. Trees and appropriately sized lawns provide valuable and cost efficient cooling during hot, dry summers.

Shut off sprinkler systems when it rains or add a moisture sensor to the controls for automated sprinklers. Adjust sprinklers so they are not watering sidewalks, driveways and the street. Water running down the street from a sprinkling system is a waste of water and an unnecessary drain on pocketbooks.



An easily fixed water waster.

## NEWS FROM THE



### Thursday Night at the Movies

The Library's Thursday Night at the Movies Series will feature lighter fare this summer when it will show six films by Woody Allen beginning in July.

The Thursday Night Movie Series has recently shown documentaries, foreign films and independent films.

#### The following films will be shown this year:

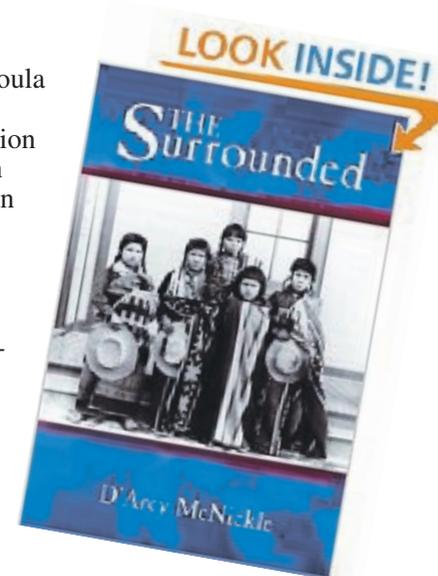
- Thursday, July 2: *Annie Hall*. Starring Woody Allen and Diane Keaton. PG, 1977.
- Thursday, July 16: *Crimes & Misdemeanors*. Starring Woody Allen, Martin Landow and Mia Farrow. PG-13, 1989.
- Thursday, Aug. 6: *Bananas*. Starring Woody Allen and Diane Keaton. PG, 1975.
- Thursday, Aug. 20: *Love & Death*. Starring Woody Allen and Diane Keaton. PG, 1975.
- Thursday, Sept. 3: *Hannah & Her Sisters*. Starring Woody Allen, Mia Farrow and Michael Caine. PG-13, 1986.
- Sept. 17: *Vicky, Cristina, Barcelona*. Starring Scarlett Johansson, Penelope Cruz and Javier Bardem. PG-13, 2008.

Join us for these excellent films by one of this country's best filmmakers. All films begin at 7 p.m. on the 3rd floor of the Library.

### One Book Montana

Each year, Humanities Montana in Missoula picks a Montana book for its One Book Montana selection and invites book discussion groups throughout the state to participate in reading this one book. The current selection is *The Surrounded* by D'Arcy McNickle. Published in 1936, the book tells of the shifting relationships between Europeans and Native Americans on the Flathead Reservation in the early part of the last century.

The Library will sponsor six discussion groups throughout the community that will take place in August. Those who sign up for one of the groups will receive a free copy of the book, courtesy of the Friends of the Library. For more details on the times and locations of these groups call the Library at 657-8258 or check our web page at [www.billings.lib.mt.us](http://www.billings.lib.mt.us).



### Montana Repertory Theater

The Montana Repertory Theater, from the University of Montana, will perform at the Library on Monday, Oct. 5 at 7 p.m. This year's production is titled *The Poe Project* and is a 50-minute production that interweaves three of Edgar Allan Poe's most famous short stories in a montage of chills and thrills. The Montana Repertory Theater is the professional theatre-in-residence at the University of Montana Department of Drama/Dance and draws on the various talents of faculty and graduate students at the University. This performance will be sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

