



"Whitepine Whispers"

News of Whitepine Grange #102

9 Faro Lane, Trout Creek, MT 59874

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February 2026

Grange kitchen is **DONE!!**

The Whitepine Grange kitchen facelift is complete at last!

After many months of planning and fundraising, we finally have a clean and attractive new kitchen that is far more functional than the original built 65 years ago. Thank you to the many individuals who stepped up to donate to this project. Kudos also to Victor Kandel at **Kandel Construction** for putting the whole project together smoothly, on time and under budget. Thanks also to **Eric Tullett, LLC**, for his beautiful custom cabinets, and to Grange member **John Haakenson** who found us a wonderful big sink and oversaw the rest of the project.

Special thanks also go to **Carolyn and Monte Nesbitt** for their sizeable donation.

The Gianforte Foundation deserves HUGE thanks for funding the purchase of a new gas stove, exhaust hood and refrigerator. It was the **Gianforte Foundation** grant that really set the wheels in motion for this whole project, and we want them to know how greatly we appreciate this help!

The first official "kitchen event" will be a potluck on Tues., Feb. 24.



Music that heals! New kids' music project to launch at Whitepine Grange in March!



Maybe you've never heard of a "steel tongue drum," but you've probably heard the music it creates. It sounds like a big, resonant wind chime. Its music is used therapeutically to calm nerves and soothe the soul. Playing this percussive instrument requires basically no musical training, and anyone can begin to make beautiful music on it within minutes.

Whitepine Grange is launching a "steel tongue drum" project and we're looking for **10 children to join our first class. The kids can be from 8 to 12 years of age.** The class is **FREE** and will be taught at Whitepine Grange beginning in late March. Classes will be held weekly at 4pm on Mondays.

The goal of this project is to introduce children to the joys of playing these instruments while creating music for others to enjoy at the same time. They'll learn about rhythm, coordination, concentration, and a little bit of music theory.

After a few weeks of lessons, the young drummers will go out to the community, as a group, to perform at senior centers, long-term care facilities, and other public venues. **Continued on page 3**

The Grange's mission: "Strengthening individuals, families and communities through service, education, nonpartisan grassroots advocacy and agricultural awareness."

ON MUSIC AND WEATHER

By Jan Manning, Whitepine Grange president

MUSIC

My poor parents! They put up with a lot of REALLY BAD NOISES when I began taking clarinet lessons in the seventh grade. Screeches and squeaks reverberated through our home during my daily practice sessions, with only an occasional "tune" distinguishable in the noise.

Learning to play a musical instrument is rewarding but it can also be taxing to those who must listen...unless that instrument is designed to produce good sounds 100 percent of the time, regardless of who is playing it. That instrument is a steel drum, also known as a "tongue drum." No musical talent is required to play it, and its sounds will "soothe the savage beast" in both the player and his audience.



Whitepine Grange has received a generous grant to start a "steel tongue drum project," first for our local kids and then for anyone else interested in joining the group. We are purchasing 10 high quality steel drums and accessories. The program will initially be open to 10 elementary school kids. Classes will begin in late March. We will meet once a week on Monday afternoons at 4pm, beginning March 30. PARTICIPTION IS FREE! **Pre-registration is required.** If you know a child who'd be interested in this exciting new project, please email me at whitepinegrange@gmail.com.

THIS WEATHER...

Did your body start to shut down during the dark, dreary weather of December and January? Mine did. Like a turtle, I withdrew into the shell of my home, not wanting to venture out into the cold dampness. I got grouchy and gained weight because I simply didn't feel like myself. Too much sitting by the woodstove. Too little physical activity. Too many Facebook reels. Not enough sunshine or fresh air. Cabin fever, for sure.



Now early February has brought us an early gift: weather conducive to being OUTSIDE again! When the rain stopped and the sun poked through, I headed outdoors again. I literally feel like a new being emerging from a bud. Sleep is better, appetite has decreased, and a new calmness surrounds me. It's the magic of Montana air and sun.

If you mention this mild weather, some killjoy will start wringing his hands and predicting apocalyptic fires and drought this summer. To those individuals I say, "Why worry about something over which you have no control? We'll all make the best of whatever happens. **Why not EMBRACE TODAY?** It's all we are guaranteed."

And speaking of "cabin fever," the annual **Cabin Fever Redneck Ball** is coming up on March 7 at the Lakeside in Trout Creek. Tickets will soon be on sale at the Lakeside Resort and other locations—watch for announcements! This night of rollicking good times, auctions, raffles, and local talent is a major fundraiser for the Trout Creek Community Improvement Association (TCCIA), which funds events like the Easter Egg Hunt, Shakespeare in the Park, and improvements at Trout Creek Park, Trout Creek School, and the boat launch.

See you outside somewhere! — JM

Music that heals

(continued from page 1)



This is the type of tongue drum we'll be getting for our program.

Tongue drums come in a variety of sizes, shapes, colors and tunings. The drums Whitepine Grange is purchasing, **with help from the Montana Arts Council and the Headwaters Foundation of Missoula**, are very high quality and hand-finished here in the USA, unlike many of the mass produced tongue drums available from China and sold on Amazon. The drums will become permanent property of Whitepine Grange so that youngsters AND adults can enjoy them for generations to come.

A tongue drum can be played either with fingers or with felt mallets. The tones are so rich and resonant that they're often used in meditative settings to relax. Since relaxation leads to healing, the drums actually have a medicinal effect for many people.

You can see, hear, and play the tongue drums at our **Grange Potluck on March 24**. The public is invited. Bring your children and let them play these fascinating instruments too. You'll want to try them too!

This project is funded in part by the Montana Arts Council, an agency of the State Government, and by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Funding is also provided by the Headwaters Foundation of Missoula.

February 2026 Calendar

Sun., Feb. 8	Beginning Agility, Week 3, 1:30pm
Sun., Feb. 8	Advanced Agility, 3:30pm
Mon., Feb. 9	Joy of Movement, 9am
Tues., Feb. 10	BEMER sessions
Wed., Feb. 11	Rough & Rowdy, 10:30am
Wed., Feb. 11	Clogging, 3pm
Thurs., Feb. 12	Joy of Movement, 9am
Sat., Feb. 14	Rally Dogs, 10am
Sun., Feb. 15	Beginning Agility, Week 4, 1:30pm
Sun., Feb. 15	Advanced Agility, 3:30pm
Mon., Feb. 16	Joy of Movement, 9am
Tues., Feb. 17	BEMER sessions
Wed., Feb. 18	Rough & Rowdy, 10:30am
Wed., Feb. 18	Rally Drop-in, 1pm
Wed., Feb. 18	Clogging, 3pm
Wed., Feb. 18	Movie, "Sorry, Wrong Number," 6pm
Thurs., Feb. 19	Joy of Movement, 9am
Fri., Feb. 20	Sew and Quilt, all day
Sun., Feb. 22	Beginning Agility, Week 5, 1:30pm
Sun., Feb. 22	Advanced Agility, 3:30pm
Mon., Feb. 23	Joy of Movement, 9am
Tues., Feb. 24	BEMER sessions
Tues., Feb. 24	Potluck & Chocolate Bingo, 5:30pm
Wed., Feb. 25	Rough & Rowdy, 10:30am
Wed., Feb. 25	Rally Drop-in, 1pm
Wed., Feb. 25	Clogging, 3pm
Thurs., Feb. 26	Joy of Movement, 9am
Sat., Feb. 28	Rally Dogs, 10am



\$2,000 in scholarship money available to Grange members!

For info, go to

<https://whitepinegrange.com>

Or email

whitepinegrange@gmail.com

Do you know someone who could use \$2,000 for trade school or college next fall? The money is available but only to those who ask for it.

The Montana State Grange is offering a \$1,000 scholarship to any Grange member who meets the judging criteria. ***The deadline for applying is FEBRUARY 25!!!***

Whitepine Grange here in Trout Creek is also offering a \$1,000 scholarship for trade school or college. ***The deadline for applying is APRIL 25!***

Applicants must be Grange members to qualify.

Why do I need to join the Grange to apply for this scholarship?

Because it's in your best interest to do so!

Job Resume:

The Grange is one of the oldest and most respected service organizations in the country. Grange membership looks good on a job resume, because it tells your prospective employer that you have a commitment to community service, that you're dependable and work with others, and that you may also have some valuable leadership or organizational experience.

Grange Promotion

The Grange is a nonprofit organization that gives generously to rural communities, mainly through volunteer projects, affordable classes, free events and more. Money for these scholarships comes from donations that result from the Grange's stellar reputation as an organization. We believe that asking for a \$40 membership is reasonable for scholarship candidates who are vying for \$1,000.

Isn't this like gambling?

Joining a Grange in order to apply for a Grange scholarship is not gambling. Granted, you have to "pay to play," but we're giving you the opportunity to improve your life two ways: by becoming a Grange member and by earning \$1,000 to pay for your career education.

How do I join the Grange?

It's a lot simpler than it was in the "old days" when your grandparents belonged. Now all you do is fill out a membership form and send it, along with a check for \$40, to the Grange secretary. There is no initiation process or oath-taking.

What's my obligation as a Grange member?

Hopefully you'll come to meetings, programs and potlucks, participate in community projects like highway litter pickup or Grange building maintenance, and enjoy being part of a very large Grange family that supports you as an individual. The Grange is non-political, non-denominational and non-judgmental. We're into GROWING things, not tearing things down.

History of Grange

The National Grange was established in 1868 as an advocate for farmers, ranchers and rural lifestyle. Community Granges were formed to help meet specific needs of each area. Today the Grange is still about agriculture, but its scope has broadened and morphed with the times. Today we're about building stronger families and communities, and bringing neighbors face to face for activities that benefit everyone.

More questions? Contact us at whitepinegrange@gmail.com.

Alzheimer's Support Group stresses, "You are not alone"

The journey through Alzheimer's and Dementia is a difficult one, not only for those afflicted but also for their friends and caregivers.

Jodie Bittinger, local facilitator of Alzheimer's/Dementia support groups, addressed an audience at Whitepine Grange last week, emphasizing this point: "You are not alone. Don't ever believe you're alone in this journey."

Bittinger, a speech/language specialist with counseling certifications, has been working with Alzheimer's, dementia, and TBI-afflicted families since 2019. She was initially reluctant to step into the role of support group facilitator until a local friend came to her in need of guidance. She felt the need to step up to the plate.



"It was a scary step," she recalls. "I never imagined I would be so blessed by the people in that group."

Since then, the group has been meeting regularly on the second Sunday of the month at the Oddfellows Hall in Thompson Falls. The size of the group is constantly changing with anywhere from three to fourteen people showing up. Sometimes it's just caregivers and other times the dementia patients will accompany them. The group meets for about an hour, talking

and sharing experiences, problem solving, and even laughing.

"If they want legal information or tips on physical therapy, posture, or whatever, I will ferret out information for them or even invite a guest speaker," she notes.

Between monthly group meetings, Bittinger says she sometimes will meet small groups for coffee in a less formal setting. "For some folks, that atmosphere is more comfortable for them."

Bittinger says there are more than 13 types of dementia, and Alzheimer's is just one of them. All types are different but in many aspects they are the same. She advises people to not get hung up on knowing the type of dementia, or trying to forecast the stages and outcomes of each type. More importantly, she says, is for caregivers to "pick their battles," accepting the way things are each day and knowing that they may quickly and temporarily change. She quotes a former group member who explained how she got through the journey with her husband. "She said, 'I just meet him where he is each day,' with no particular expectations."

Most of the people in the support group are women, although she says men do occasionally participate. She sees the need for an all-male support group but admits it should probably have a male leader. No special qualifications are needed for the role, although training is available.

Bittinger loves her work and finds her greatest joy in seeing supportive relationships form and grow within the group. She has witnessed participants who enter the group with anger and bitterness and evolve into helpful, empathetic guides for others in the group.

"Everyone in the group leaves a changed person," she says. "It's a totally positive experience."

The Alzheimer's/Dementia Support Group meets at 2pm on the second Sunday of the month in the Oddfellows Building behind Internet Kitchen. There is no need to call first. Those wishing to reach out to Bittinger can call her at 406-580-4947.



Movie Night at the Grange

Wed., Feb. 18, 6pm

"Sorry, Wrong Number"



*A classic thriller-chiller starring
Barbara Stanwyck and Burt Lancaster.
In scary and dramatic black and white!*

*Open to the public. FREE admission. Popcorn provided.
Bring your own beverages.*

Save these dates!

Tues., Feb. 24

Potluck and Chocolate Bingo

Wed., Feb. 25

Movie Night, "Sorry, Wrong Number"

Sat., March 7

Redneck Ball at the Lakeside

Sat., March 21

Sourdough Bread Class, details coming...

Tues., March 24

Potluck and TONGUE DRUM intro

Sat., March 28

"Stash Sale," 10am to 2pm

Sun., April 19

Grange Dance, 1-4pm, w/"Western Sky"

Exercise Classes going strong at the Grange

It's been three years now since we started our "Joy of Movement" exercise classes at Whitepine Grange. The hour-long classes meet every Monday and Thursday at 9am on the Grange's blue matted floor.

In each hour of constant, gentle movement we address balance, strength, cardio, and mind-body agility. Every class is slightly different, but some elements are always the same: MUSIC (popular tunes chosen for the rhythm to keep us going) and FUN! Sometimes we play catch, roll around on stability balls, do freestyle dance, do boxing drills, use mini-trampolines, resistance bands, hand weights and step platforms, and even do some yoga moves on individual mats or in our chairs.

The goal is to tune in to our own muscular system, appreciate and maintain our abilities to function, and to ***make movement more fun than sitting still.***

Whether you're a distance runner, someone in rehab, or just someone who 's decided to finally get off the couch and start living, this class will accommodate you. All shapes and sizes are welcome.

We have anywhere from 6 to 14 "regulars" who show up for the 9am classes, and there is always room for more! Equipment is provided, the camaraderie is great, and you will leave class feeling happier and better than you did when you arrived.

The classes are free for Grange members, and \$5 for all others. No reservations needed, just drop in with your sneakers and a water bottle!

Whitepine Grange Officers 2026

President:	Jan Manning
Vice-President:	Kate Comunetti
Secretary:	Patty English
Treasurer:	Dona Pope

Executive Committee:

Kerri Cobb, John Haakenson, Juanita Triplett

Whitepine Grange is the community center in western Sanders County, serving you and your family, promoting neighborhood unity, fostering healthy growth in all forms from agriculture to family values. We are nonpartisan, non-denominational, and open to the public for most low-cost or no-cost events and activities.

How to join: Print the membership form on the last page of this newsletter and mail it in with a check for \$40 (individuals) and \$70 (families).

Join Whitepine Grange today!

For yourself, your family, your rural neighbors & community!

____ **New Membership** _____ **Renewal**

Individual Membership: \$40/year Family Membership: \$70/year

Name: _____ Veteran? _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Date of Birth ____/____/____ Phone _____

Email (please print clearly) _____

What are your hobbies? (so we can plan programs of interest to you and maybe utilize your expertise) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Seven winning reasons to join Whitepine Grange:

- Build a support network with your rural neighbors.
- Great monthly programs on topics of local interest.
- Family friendly activities like potlucks, parties, dances and Bingo.
- Community service projects like highway cleanup, the dictionary program, kid-friendly activities, and military care packages.
- Exercise classes for all ages.
- A gathering place for neighbors.
- Your membership dollars help pay for upgrades and maintenance for this historic building, and also for the many community programs designed for you, your family and neighbors. Whitepine Grange was chartered in 1938. In 2026 the Grange is still going strong! Join Whitepine Grange #102 and become part of its enduring and wonderful story!



Please make checks to "Whitepine Grange #102"
 Return this form, with payment, to any Whitepine Grange officer, or mail to:

Whitepine Grange #102
 PO Box 1313
 Trout Creek, MT 59874

For Family Memberships:

Spouse/Partner's Name _____ Veteran? _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Date of Birth ____/____/____ Phone _____

Email (please print clearly) _____

Children:

_____ Date of Birth ____/____/____

_____ Date of Birth ____/____/____

_____ Date of Birth ____/____/____

_____ Date of Birth ____/____/____