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Humanities Montana wins fifth national award

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HUMANITIES MONTANA WINS FIFTH NATIONAL AWARD

MISSOULA — Humanities Montana was honored earlier this month with the Helen and Martin Schwartz Prize for Excellence in Public Programming, given by the Federation of State Humanities Councils. The award was presented Nov. 6 at the National Humanities Conference in Omaha, Neb.

Established through a 1982 endowment gift, the Schwartz Prize honors the nation’s best public humanities program. Humanities Montana was recognized for its Public Affairs Initiative, a series of programs focused on civil discourse and civic engagement funded through a generous appropriation from the U.S. Department of Education. U.S. Sen. Max Baucus was instrumental in securing funds for this initiative.

“Congratulations to Humanities Montana on this prestigious award,” Baucus said. “This is well-deserved recognition for their terrific programs that are providing opportunities for folks across the state to get involved in discussions about local, state and national issues.”

The specific programs recognized include “Can We Talk?: A Community Conversation” in Billings in January, which drew 135 participants; development of “Reflect: Community
Readings and Conversations,” which engages groups in thoughtful discussion of their values; “Reason and Respect: A Conference on Civil Discourse” in Hamilton in April attended by 120 citizens; and a Civic Education Institute in Billings in June for 40 teachers from around Montana.

These four programs are part of a larger initiative, which offers Humanities Montana Speakers Bureau presentations on public affairs, earlier civil discourse conferences in Bozeman and Great Falls, and grants for public affairs work.

“We are delighted with the recognition the Schwartz Prize brings to this project,” Humanities Montana Executive Director Ken Egan said. “We are committed to helping Montanans discuss crucial challenges in a civil way. Special thanks to Senator Baucus for helping us receive funding from the U. S. Department of Education.”

The award is Humanities Montana’s fifth Schwartz Prize. The organization was honored in 1984 for its support of the Montana State University’s “LOGON ’83” conference, in 1994 for its “Montana This Morning” television series, in 1999 for its support of the Bozeman Trail Heritage Conference and in 2004 for its Confluence of Cultures Conference in Missoula. In the history of the Schwartz Prize, only one other state humanities council has received the honor five times.

Founded in 1972, Humanities Montana is an independent nonprofit state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, a federal agency that supports learning in history, philosophy, literature and other humanities disciplines. Humanities Montana provides grants for public humanities programs, a statewide Speakers Bureau, reading and discussion programs and the annual Montana Festival of the Book.

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