

Stepping out of Bounds in Billings at What We Do Best – Eat!!

By Sherry Sayers

At the 20th AVA Biennial Convention in Billings, we are planning a great time for you at our social events. Our Meet and Greet on Wednesday night will be a true Volksmarch tradition with Brats, Burgers and Huckleberry Sliders (a local favorite). Weather permitting, it will be held outside in the Convention Hotel's courtyard, a lush, green backyard with plenty of room to kick up your heels and do a little "chicken dance." German music is being planned as we speak. Don't forget to wear your club shirts.

After a morning of informative workshops on Thursday, our box lunch is not a box lunch at all, but a genuine sit-down lunch with your choice of roast beef, turkey, ham and assorted deli cheeses on a fresh baked hoagie roll, as well as potato salad, potato chips, and chicken noodle soup. Oh, and don't forget the delicious brownies for dessert.

On Friday after the awesome walk up on the Rims, we will have the box lunch with the above meats, plus a special treat of a local waffle cookie. On Friday night, we will celebrate the conclusion of the 20th with our plated dinner, codenamed "Out of Bounds Bash." This will include not one, but two entrees for your delight, London Broil and Boursin Chicken, rosemary roasted potatoes, green beans, a dinner roll and dessert. We are doing a little something different with the centerpieces at the bash, which are going to be cute wildlife animal wine bottle holders (with wine of course). We will then auction them off during the dinner. So far we have a bear, moose, wolf, fox, deer and horse.

One of the more popular features of conventions is the Silent Auction. This is a fun way we raise money for the AVA while making a variety of regional specialties available for you to take home. I know a lot of us bid on Louise's Homemade Pickles, and maybe there will be basket(s) of Montana memorabilia as well. This year we are using a web based tool to help us maintain the information necessary to host a Silent Auction, from tracking each item and who it is from to printing out the tax deduction information you need when you donate items to the auction. If you know what you are going to donate, please send an email to SilentAuction@2017AVAConvention.org and we will respond with the information we need from you to pre-load your information. This will make your donation experience much smoother. For those of you driving to the convention, bring all your stuff with you, making sure you have let us know ahead of time. Then just drop it off because the paperwork is already completed. If you cannot bring it with you, we will have an address to send it to as we get closer to the convention.

If for any reason we have not kept you busy enough at this convention, there are a multitude of attractions in Billings and nearby. Just 30 miles from Billings is Pompey's Pillar National Monument, the site that bears William Clark's signature carved into the pillar, the only physical evidence of Lewis and Clark's expedition in 1806. Please note there are 200 stairs up to the pillar. They have a magnificent visitor's center, which is open from 9 am to 6 pm. There is an admission fee of \$7 per vehicle. There is also Pictograph Cave State Park, a mere five miles from Billings, where you can explore three caves and see evidence of habitation from 3,000 years ago. In Billings, there is ZooMontana, which is Montana's only zoo, where you will find animals that can survive Montana's temperate climate housed in natural habitats. There is a \$7 fee for adults.

We hope you will have a great time in Billings – a true Western adventure and a Whole Different Kind of Convention where we have shown you how to Step out of Bounds.