Greetings from the MBEA board! What a crazy year we’ve all been through! We hope that those of you who’ve had to be remote are all finding yourselves back in your classrooms, renewing connections with your students. If you were fortunate to be in person all year, may Spring Fever not be too much to handle.

The Spring meeting of the executive committee will be in Lewistown on April 10. We’ll be working on programming for the 2021 Fall Institute in Bozeman in October. Please reach out if you have a proposal or request. We’ll be focusing on **Employability Skills and Work Based Learning** this year and are always looking for programs to highlight. Specifically, we’d really like to do one session in the roundtable format and foster conversations about what’s working with our students. How are we helping foster accountability, punctuality, record keeping, etc… please email mandy.wichman@hobson.k12.mt.us if you have suggestions or to volunteer as a presenter.

The board is short a member this year as we had no volunteers to be the Vice President. This puts somewhat of an added burden on the current members of the board. Please consider taking a bit of time out of your busy schedule to help make connections between members and become more active in the organization.

We recognized some amazing educators at the October, 2020, meeting over Zoom. Congratulations to **Janie McFarland**, recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award. Janie has been in education for over thirty years, has served on the MBEA board and is a lifetime member of the Montana ACTE, also serving as the secretary for the national association.

**Jill Page** has been in the classroom for more than fifteen years, has a Master’s in Education, and is active in JMG, ASNE, NGPF, and BPA. She was nominated this year for the Outstanding Business Teacher Award, as was **Brad Mehr**. Brad is a past president of the MBEA, a DECA advisor of the year, and leads the largest DECA chapter in Montana. The award went to **Jill Page**. That was a tough decision by the board.

The final award was for Outstanding New Business Teacher of the Year. MBEA President **Mandy Wichman** is in her fifth year teaching business and her second as a BPA advisor. She is also the secretary of both the Montana ACTE and the Western Business Education Association.

**Calie Wineinger**, MBEA Past President, will handle the awards nominations again. Please send nominations by October 1: cwineinger@froidschool.com.

BPA held its State Leadership Conference virtually in March. There was a bit of a learning curve, but everything went well. Nationals will be spread out over the end of April and some of May. DECA’s State Career Development Conference was also virtual this year, at the end of January, start of February, and the International Career Development Conference will also be virtual in April. Kids and advisors alike are ready to get back to in-person activities!

Youth Entrepreneurs recently highlighted the work of business teacher **Tiana Yates** and her colleague in FCS **Mindy Kohn**. These two are helping reimagine Colstrip’s economic future through their classes and co-curricular lesson planning. Here’s what Hallway Chatter had to say:
“In the small southeastern Montana town of Colstrip, the coal plant has been as dependable as the air we breathe. The vast majority of Colstrip’s fewer than 3,000 residents are employed by the power plant or the coal mine that feeds it. So, when pressures forced the plant’s owners to announce a phased, permanent closure of the facility, Colstrip residents were shook.

Colstrip produces nearly half the power that flows into major Washington-state business campuses (e.g., Boeing and Microsoft), but this doesn’t matter: Colstrip will be forced to reimagine itself. It will need to pivot it’s entire local economy in just a matter of years or face the fate of too many other towns before it: a permanent diaspora of its people.

But in Colstrip, one brave teacher believes there’s a better way forward. Mindy Kohn (and her colleague Tiana Yates), of Colstrip High School, sees Youth Entrepreneurs not just as the key to improving student outcomes, but as an important factor in revitalizing the local economy. Kohn brought YE into her culinary, fashion, tourism, and personal finance classes, a move that initially bewildered students and parents.

‘I don’t think anyone could rationally argue why it wouldn’t make sense to learn about entrepreneurship in almost any class, truly,’ Kohn says. ‘It has the power to really impact the community.’

We’ll be watching Colstrip closely as Kohn and Yates churn out the social entrepreneurs that will no doubt rescue their town, bringing it back to prosperity. Kudos to you both.”

Youth Entrepreneurs agrees that entrepreneurial thinking should be fostered in all subjects. As such they are planning an expansion this spring. Stay tuned for more information about Empowered, a new website and an even larger database of resources for teachers of all content areas. For more information, reach out to hello@youthentrepreneurs.org.

**Next Gen Personal Finance** rolled out some exciting lessons and programs for Financial Literacy Month in March. They’re working to grow their Middle Level reach, and if you refer three middle level teachers you can get free posters for your classroom. They’ve also sent links out for some professional development and videos. Watch for more information on programs as well as grants for adding a Personal Finance Elective to your school’s schedule.

The board wants to thank you for being involved in the MBEA as well as Montana ACTE. We also renew our call for presentations and for someone to fill the position Vice President. Happy Spring!