

**NEWS RELEASE**  
**GOVERNOR STEVE BULLOCK**  
**STATE OF MONTANA**

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**CONTACT:** Kevin O'Brien, 444-4521, or Judy Beck, 444-9725

**Governor Announces Montana Ambassador Awards**

HELENA – Governor Steve Bullock and the Montana Ambassadors today announced the 2012 honorees who have made an outstanding contribution to economic development in Montana.

“Each year, the men and women involved with the Montana Ambassadors channel their energies into strengthening existing businesses in the state and attracting new ones,” Bullock said. “I’m truly impressed with the caliber of the Ambassadors we are honoring this year.”

For outstanding service to the organization, Montana Ambassador of the Year is **Dr. Joe Michels** of Solomon Bruce Consulting, formerly of Billings. Dr. Michels was chosen for exemplifying what it means to be a Montana Ambassador and for his service to the organization, particularly his effort to organize last year’s annual Ambassadors conference in Billings.

The Montana Ambassadors’ Entrepreneur of the Year is **Brian Menges** of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Bistro in Livingston. Menges was nominated for his passion for quality and his commitment to locally grown, organic foods. He has expanded his business, supported sustainable agricultural practices, and committed to having a positive impact on his community and the lives of his employees.

The Montana Ambassadors’ Business of the Year is **Town Pump** for demonstrating extraordinary innovation and success in its field of business, including a commitment to its employees, community and economic development in the state of Montana. **Tom and Mary Kenneally** have been in operation since 1953 and employ over 2,500 Montanans.

This year’s “Mike Malone Educator of the Year” award was given to two recipients: **Professor Rob Thomas and Professor Steve Mock** from the University of Montana Western in Dillon. Mock and Thomas were nominated for their leadership in piloting the Experience One (X1) program, an innovative scheduling program that allows students to take one class at a time, three hours each day for 18 days. The pilot was so successful, the program has been adopted campus-wide. Montana Western is the only public college in the country to offer block scheduling for all its on-campus programs.

The award for Outreach Montana Ambassador of the Year goes to the **Missoula Children’s Theater** under the direction of **Don Collins**. The Missoula Children’s Theater was nominated for

the award for promoting Montana on a global basis for over 40 years. During that time, it has performed in every state in the U.S. and on U.S. military bases around the world, as it works to develop life skills in children and spread the goodwill of Montana around the world.

The 2012 Montana Ambassador Plenipotentiary Award is given to **Evan Barrett**, previously of the Governor's Office of Economic Development, for his meritorious service to the economic development of Montana. Barrett was critical to the success of many business attraction and retention projects and has served as a Montana Ambassador for many years. He was nominated for his tireless and creative efforts to enhance the economic vitality of Montana.

The governor will present the 2012 Montana Ambassador Awards at the annual meeting to be held at the Great Northern Hotel in Helena on February 21. The conference will take place February 21st and 22nd, with the theme "The New Economy – Strategic Partnerships in Healthcare and Education."

For more information on these awards and the annual meeting and conference, visit <http://www.montanaambassadors.com>.

The Montana Ambassadors is a volunteer, not-for-profit organization of leaders in business, education, and local and state government with a common dedication to serving the Governor, doing business in Montana, and furthering the best interests of the state.

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