

2026 Annual Meeting workshops, presentations, and builds

Workshops:

Low Impact Masonry Heater Workshop 2026-Material Production - Lasse Holmes and Tom Hirsch

Using locally sourced materials, we will be mixing, forming, and drying high mass adobes (for the heat battery) and also firing homebrew refractory bricks (for the combustion core) for use in a low-embodied energy masonry heater build in 2027.

- 2026 will focus on making the mass bricks and fire bricks.
- 2027 will be building with the materials.

Association presentation on the whole concept of low-impact embodied energy included.

Indiana Limestone Facing - Dave Z

We have a sponsor donating 2.5 tons of Indiana limestone/4" bed depth. This stone will be used for heater facing, accents, and keystone/cornerstone applications. There will be opportunities to learn stone cutting and dressing as well as keystone fabrication and carving. We will have chisels and hammers available to use or bring your own kit. Indiana Limestone is famous for carving, and there are abundant opportunities to carve a perfect MHA keystone for your favorite arch.

Basics and Theory Class - Dan Peltier and Max

The class is scheduled for approximately 20 hours. Four of those hours will be scheduled as virtual classroom time for the week before the meeting in the evening, and the remaining hours will be a hands-on demonstration where you will have the opportunity to be part a of a masonry heater build.

Pre-arrival, online classes are scheduled for March 31st and April 1st with Chris Prior

Sketch Up – Boris

SketchUp is a simple CAD program made for creating three-dimensional models in a quick and intuitive manner. It is the fastest way to create heater drawings with dimensions or course by course views. We will learn to use the basic tools by creating a heater core made of individual firebricks.

The classes will run Tuesday to Friday 7AM to 8AM, before breakfast.

A link to download the SketchUp program will be provided before April

Presentations:

Modular Approach - Max Edleson

This talk emphasizes the value of breaking the functional parts of a masonry heater into modular components to allow for both flexibility and efficiency in design. By developing a strategy where variations are not tied to a specific masonry bond pattern, changes can be made without disrupting the key repeatable components such as the firebox and oven. We will review common heat exchange flow patterns such as the 5-Run, ContraFlow, and Bell designs and look at how these can be adapted to this modular approach.

Sketch Up - Max Edleson

SketchUp is a powerful tool for visualizing a masonry heater and enhancing sales and design. We will share our design studio's process of importing architect's drawings and scaling them in order to insert our 3D models. We will show how we use the software to develop concept designs for the client. Once a design is agreed upon, we are able to add even more detail so that drawings can be submitted for permit review and to specify rough openings and coordination with other building trades.

Low Impact Masonry Heaters - Lasse Holmes

Lasse Holmes and Thomas Hirsch will give a presentation (hopefully igniting a fire in the group discussion!) on material choices for masonry heaters and on evaluating them for health, social, and environmental impacts.

New website launch – Patrick Seiben

Introduction to the new MHA website including bells and whistles

30th Anniversary at Wildacres – Wendy and Chris

Brainstorm idea/Cookbook

Smoke Testing / Videos Presentation - Chris Prior

Description posting soon.

Hands On Build Projects

J Loop Build (Beginner) – Aki Yoshimizu

Description posting soon.

Bell Heater Build (Intermediate) - Jim Schalles

In this workshop, we will be building a double bell heater with a large radiant backrest and a heated bench. We'll discuss different options for firebox designs, the flexibility of bells and their uses as heat exchangers and facing options for masonry heaters. We'll plan to incorporate both brick and earth/clay finishes into the facing of this heater.

Heater Build (Advanced) - Eric Mosier and Boris

Description posting soon.

Oval-Shaped Oven with Central Fire Trough Build - Jon Santiago

This will be an oval-shaped oven with the door opening on the long side. The oven will feature a central trough where the fire is made, and two raised decks on either end of the oval. The fire is front and center for guests to see, compared with a traditional round oven where you rarely see the fire unless you are the chef. Beyond the aesthetic, it creates a multi-zone cooking environment that allows for roasting and grilling in the central trough. This type of oven has great appeal to a residential or commercial customer who wants the ambiance of a fireplace with the cooking ability of a brick oven. Our oven will be about 4' wide.

Vault Oven Build - Pat Manley with Pat Seiben

Led by Pat Manly, a team will build a 3'x4' vaulted arch oven based on a scalable design. With many hands, our team will build a bake oven big enough to cook pizza by the end of the week. Geared towards those with masonry experience, but beginners always welcome

Copper Wood-Fired - Chris Prior/Bucky Black

Description posting soon.

Other Activities open to all attendees:

Design Contest and Awards – [Watch for description online and via email](#)

Auction – Thursday Night

Each year during our Annual Meeting, we hold our entertaining MHA Auction Night after dinner on Thursday. Proceeds from the auction help fund MHA's membership support work throughout the year. Auction items in the past have ranged from masonry tools and supplies to Kacheln tiles to handcrafted jewelry. There

are often gift certificates and/or masonry tools donated by sponsors along with regional specialties brought by MHA members. Every year sees a different collection of items, all of which come together for an exciting evening of bidding. This year we hope to add a LiveStreaming option for those at home to bid on items as well!

Pizza Party – Friday Night

All oven and heater builds created during the week are fired up to cook dinner for us and keep everyone warm if the night is chilly! This year's builds will include a Low Country Boil alongside the ever-popular pizza ovens and three skill levels of builds. This is a great evening of community, connection, and great food for all the attendees.

Clean Up – Saturday daytime

This is an all-hands on deck time when we break down the week's work and help return the Wildacres barn area back to pre-conference shape. It is a busy, yet productive time that includes a fair amount of learning as well. All attendees are asked to lend a hand so that the cleanup doesn't land on just a few individuals.