

2026 Annual Meeting workshops, presentations, and builds

Workshops:

Low Impact Masonry Heater Workshop 2026-Material Production - Lasse Holmes and Thomas 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 Zeltwanger

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 Rob Snell

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 of a masonry heater build.

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

Sketch Up – Boris Kukolj

SketchUp is a simple CAD program made for creating three-dimensional models quickly and intuitively. 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 from Tuesday to Friday, 7 AM to 8 AM, before breakfast. Trimble, the company that now owns SketchUp, has been making free versions difficult to access. The last free desktop version dates back to 2017 and is no longer supported. It does everything we need, though.

Based on past years' experience, we will make good progress if everybody brings their own laptop with SketchUp already installed and a click-wheel mouse

SketchUp Make 2017 for Windows 7 & 8

<https://web.archive.org/web/20220217222923/https://download.sketchup.com/sketchupmake-2017-2-2555-90782-en-x64.exe>

SketchUp Make 2017 for macOS (unstable on some versions after 12)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20220217222923/https://download.sketchup.com/sketchupmake-2017-3-116-90851-en.dmg>

The free web version requires registration but no credit card and also covers our needs:

<https://app.sketchup.com/app>

Presentations:

Low Impact Masonry Heaters - Lasse Holmes and Thomas Hirsch

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.

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 architects' 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 can add even more detail so that drawings can be submitted for permit review and to specify rough openings and coordination with other building trades.

New website launch – Patrick Sieben

Introduction to the new MHA website, including bells and whistles

Observations on the History of the "Russian Stove in North America" - Stefan Polatschek

History can get very exciting very quickly. We'll start today and take small steps – 50, 150, 210 years, and many more – could it be 500? We'll find out together.

For many years, numerous technical publications and drawings served as our guide. But what about the many gaps in the documentation? How did the communication go? How are we able to find clues? I promise, it happens entirely without AI, the good old-fashioned heater mason's way, to arrive at an up-to-date result. Most importantly, though: Can we learn anything from this that applies to our present day?

Smoke Testing / Videos Presentation - Chris Prior

The smoke chamber of a fireplace is where all the magic takes place. The geometry of the design can greatly determine how well or poorly the gas flow patterns through it will be. We did extensive smoke flow video testing on various smoke chamber configurations, and the results are eye-opening indeed.

Hands-On Build Projects

Frisch J Loop Build (Beginner) – Aki Yoshimizu

Led by Aki Yoshimizu, this project will give beginners a chance to get their hands on a basic project. With a team, this build takes only a few days and is fired up by the end of the week.

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.

The Calculated Grundofen: A German/Austrian Masonry Heater Design/Build Workshop (Advanced) - Eric Moshier

This advanced workshop focuses on the design and construction of a German/Austrian calculated Grundofen masonry heater. Eric Moshier will provide a brief overview of the AFPMA French Masonry Heater calculation software, which serves as the design basis for the project. He will then dive deep into the hands-on build, walking participants through the real-world construction decisions that bring a calculated design to life. The emphasis is on building: from firebox geometry to heat channel layout, participants will see how a seasoned

mason approaches a sophisticated heater build from the ground up. Recommended for experienced heater builders looking to expand their construction repertoire.

Tundra Home Masonry Heater Kit – Arthur Shtrevensky

This build will be using one of Canada Masonry Heater Kits' products to demonstrate a kit build. Over two days, the heater will be built from start to finish. Once complete, the kit will be donated to our Thursday night Auction!

Advanced 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 Sieben

Led by Pat Manley, 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 are always welcome

Rocket Bell Cajun Boil and Smoker - Chris Prior/Bucky Black

"A copper" or a "wash copper" is the traditional name for a wood or coal-fired English water heater used to heat water for laundry or bathing. Last year's performance of this project exceeded all expectations, and we are building it once again to streamline the build process with the application of #2 arch bricks. This year's build will include a smoking chamber/oven to be used to cook a ribeye roast.

Other Activities open to all attendees:

Design Contest and Awards

Open to all voting members. You do not have to be in attendance at Wildacres to submit designs.

[Description went out to members by email on 03.01.2026.](#)

Auction – Thursday Night

Each year during our Annual Meeting, we hold our entertaining MHA Auction on Thursday after dinner. Auction proceeds 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.

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 fall on just a few individuals.