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# CUSTER COUNTRY

M O N T A N A

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E-Newsletter February 2009

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COMING SOON

**THE TYPE RIDER**  
Review & Trip Planner



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## GETTING THE WORD OUT

Part of my job for Custer Country is writing press releases and articles for publication that let people know what a great corner of the world we live in. I enjoy doing it and I hope I'm helping to get the word out.

Unfortunately, sometimes press releases are overlooked or ignored by newspapers and other publications because many times a press release is self-serving and commercial. That means we have to use other means of spreading the word about Custer Country.

One way is participation in travel shows. It isn't cheap, but I do get a chance to talk one-on-one with folks who truly are interested in visiting places they've never been, or who want to come back to our beautiful state. My goal at these travel shows is to let people know that there is a lot to see here in Custer Country as they travel to the state's big draws of Glacier and Yellowstone Parks. I let them know about alternative routes to the parks that will take them through Custer Country and about events and attractions in our region that are worth including in their plans, even if it means driving a few miles out of their way. It's fun to hear comments like, "Wow, I didn't know that was there," or "I've heard of that before, but I haven't ever



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## CUSTER COUNTRY IN FOCUS

What's there to do in Custer Country in February and March? A lot as it turns out. There's something for everybody to enjoy aside from the moderate weather we've been experiencing.

If you missed Valentine's Day, you could make up by taking your sweetheart out to dinner at one of Custer Country's great restaurants! Or, maybe attend the play, *A Flea in Her Ear* at the [Billings Studio Theater](#), which runs through the end of February.

There are trade shows, [the 34th annual Northern Rodeo Association Finals](#), and even a concert or two. So, put on your best duds, pick your favorite restaurant, and show your honey a great time. This is one sure way of accruing dividends during a time when they're hard to find!

gone. This might be the year to do that." I've just returned from the St. Louis Travel Show in St. Charles, Missouri. The show was attended by over 8,000 folks who are looking for new places to visit and new adventures to experience.

Another very effective way of getting folks to learn about our attractions and events is by conducting what are called "FAM" tours. "FAM" is short for "Familiarization," and the tours are meant to introduce writers, photojournalists, videographers, and tour operators to Custer Country. Working with Travel Montana, we find qualified writers with proven credentials who we know will produce stories about the region that will be featured in publications like *Cowboys and Indians*, *True West*, *Indian Country Today*, *Country*, and *Persimmon Hill*, to name just a few. Custer Country has also been featured in a video travel series that airs on PBS stations throughout the country. That FAM tour took place in 2004 and it is still reaping benefits.

Again, such activities aren't cheap. Travel Montana usually arranges for transportation costs for the journalists, after which we take over. We're responsible for itineraries, lodging, food, transportation while they're in the region and any other incidentals. Our goal is to expose the journalists to as many unique places and opportunities in a short period of time as possible. The days get long, but they end up being well worth it in most cases.

Newspaper and magazine articles and video features are not the only results of our FAM tours. One journalist who participated in our Dinosaur FAM in 2005, which was a cooperation between Custer Country and Russell Country, wrote a novel about two young brothers who come to Montana in the early 1900s after their parents are killed in a hurricane in Texas. Linda Aksomitis says she had the idea for the book before she participated in the FAM trip but the places she visited and her experiences here helped flesh out the story with places like Billings, Pompeys Pillar, and many other locations in eastern Montana as backdrops to the novel for young readers. The name of the book is [Longhorns and Outlaws](#) and it's published by Coteau Books for Kids. If you can't find it in your local bookstore, it's available at Amazon.com. It's an easy read and you might recognize some of the places in Custer Country where you've visited or lived.

'Til next month, stay warm and keep smiling.

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## Contact Information

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