

Spider scientist, indigenous educator and type designer among eight speakers chosen for TEDxMahtomedi 2019

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After considering nearly 50 applications from across the United States and auditioning 21 top prospects, the [TEDxMahtomedi](#) program team has chosen eight speakers for TEDxMahtomedi 2019, to be held November 10th at WBUUC, 328 Maple Street in Mahtomedi.

The annual TEDxMahtomedi event consists of a series of brief (typically 10- to 12-minute) presentations in the spirit of the world-famous TED talks — “Ideas Worth Spreading.” Videos of presentations are professionally produced and posted online, where they inform and inspire thousands of others around the world.

Tickets for this year’s event, built around the theme “Think Again!”, are available on a first-come, first-served basis for \$20 (\$10 for the first 15 students, thanks to a grant from the [Mahtomedi Area Educational Foundation](#)) at [TEDxMahtomedi.com](#). Ticket sales are limited by TED Global to 100. Along with presentations by the speakers below, the event will include screening of several internationally acclaimed TED talks, pre-event appetizers and a conversation break with beverages and sweet treats.

This year’s speakers:

Founder of a mission-driven cookie company, **Junita Flowers** works to reduce relationship violence against women through the power of conversation. She will challenge us to move away from defending our own perspectives and instead embrace the power of hope to break down barriers, change perspectives, mend hearts and unify people for common good.

Kyle (KC) Legacion is a recent graduate of the University of Minnesota / Guthrie Theater BFA Actor Training Program with a minor in Sustainability Studies. Kyle will describe how social media keeps us from engaging fully with our environment and explore how we might improve our relationship with nature — and better care for our planet — by being less present to our devices and more present to the world around us.

Brent Olson is a commissioner in Big Stone County on the Minnesota–South Dakota border. He will invite us to “Think Again!” about the future of rural America as he describes his vision to turn one of the smallest, poorest counties in the state into a vibrant haven for creative minds reminiscent of the Left Bank in Paris, SoHo in New York and Uptown in the Twin Cities.

A childhood survivor of civil war and now founder and executive director of the Sierra Leone Foundation for New Democracy, **Hindolo Pokawa** works to build local communities’ capacity to see themselves as part of the solution to problems they face — producers of knowledge and agents of change. He will speak about the power of teaching

and learning from a cultural context grounded in indigenous teachings.

Carolyn Porter is an award-winning graphic designer, type designer and author whose book “Marcel’s Letters: A Font and the Search for One Man’s Fate” was a 2018 Minnesota Book Award finalist. She will talk about the value of passion projects — things we do outside of work that provide an outlet to explore, create, think and “Think Again!” about new ways to approach problems.

A lead scientist at 3M, **Vasav Sahni** uses spider silk as an inspiration for the development of innovative adhesives. Starting with his own experiences (he’s terrified of spiders), he will explore how collective opinions, societal beliefs, and individual experiences can keep us “stuck” to old ways of doing things, and how we might convert these barriers to opportunities to maximize our impact in the global community.

April Seifert is a social-cognitive psychologist, life design strategist, and co-founder of Peak Mind: The Center for Psychological Strength. Her presentation will explore how the choices we make with respect to self-awareness, flexibility and psychological strength can transform our minds into our our biggest liability — or our most valuable asset.

Mahtomedi High School students **Ruby Ales, Mary Edmunds, Ava Schimnowski** and **Alyne Torenvliet** will use their experience as a Modeling a Protein Story (MAPS) high school team and subsequent presentation of their research at a national Experimental Biology conference to invite the audience to “Think Again!” about the role of science in our lives.

The emcee for this year’s event will be **Kevin Donovan**, a member of the 916 School Board and the Mahtomedi School Board and director of development for the Mahtomedi Area Educational Foundation. A former Minnesota School Boards Association president, Donovan is a longtime area resident and advocate for education and community service.

TEDxMahtomedi 2019 is a volunteer-led initiative supported by Mahtomedi Public Schools Community Education, Century College, Century College Foundation and the City of Mahtomedi with generous support from our sponsors. Learn more by checking out [past TEDx Mahtomedi events](#) or email info@tedxmahtomedi.com.