



ILLUMINATE

TED^x StCloud

October 9, 2025

Paramount Center for the Arts

Exclusive TEDxStCloud

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Tonight's Program

Part One

6:30 - 7:30

Stephen Rider

Debra Leigh

Chase Larson

Conversation with
Sr. Michaela Hedican
and Mary Bruno

Intermission

7:30 - 8:00

Part Two

8:00 - 9:00

Performance by
George Maurer and
Jeff Engholm

Clare Richards
Jill Blashack Strahan
Cory Hepola

Welcome to TEDxStCloud 2025!

Tonight, we gather to **ILLUMINATE** "Ideas worth spreading."

For nine years, the historic Paramount Theater (and twice its virtual twin in AltSpace!) has lit up with engaging speakers and entertainment. Each time, new sparks of thought light the way for conversations and connections that extend far beyond this room.

We continue to be amazed by those who step into the spotlight on the red dot at center stage. This year, **Chase, Clare, Corey, Debra, Jill, and Stephen** have given us talks so bright with possibility that it has been a challenge to keep them a secret. But we want their ideas to shine first for YOU — and for the dedicated volunteers who work tirelessly behind the scenes — so we can all experience the glow of discovery together.

Our performers – **George Mauer and Jeff Engholm** – will light up the evening with their artistry and creativity.

And this year, a special source of light joins us: **a unique art exhibit of the Scroll of the Rule of Saint Benedict**. This historic work offers a rare chance to reflect on wisdom from the past while new ideas illuminate the present. Artist Mary Bruno and Sister Michaela Hedican will discuss this work tonight as well.

As you may know, TED is an international nonprofit devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks. TED began in 1984 as a conference where Technology, Entertainment, and Design converged, and today it shines across nearly every field — from science to business to global issues — in more than 100 languages.

TEDxStCloud is a nonprofit endeavor produced for our community by an all-volunteer team, in partnership with 19 generous local businesses and organizations, including our exclusive Sustainer Partner, Granite Partners; and our Futurist Partner, CentraCare. Please join us in thanking them — their support provides the light that makes tonight possible.

In keeping with the TEDx philosophy of sparking meaningful discussion and connection, we invite you to welcome tonight's speakers with curiosity and gratitude. Do their talks help **ILLUMINATE** your own way of thinking, or do they cast beams toward entirely new perspectives?

Be open to the light of possibility!

Brian Hart and the entire
TEDxStCloud Team



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ILLUMINATE
TED^x StCloud

Featured Artists



Sister Michaela Hedican & Mary Bruno

Sister Michaela Hedican

Sister Michaela Hedican of Saint Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, Minnesota, has served as a teacher, spiritual director, and leader throughout her 60 years as a Benedictine. She has been prioress of two monasteries, president of the Monastic Congregation of Saint Benedict, and director of oblates and mission advancement. Today, she serves as assistant dean at Saint Scholastica Convent, supporting the sisters' health care needs. Rooted in Benedictine spirituality, Sister Michaela brings a lifelong commitment to service, faith, and community — and often reflects that she may have been “born a Benedictine.”



George Maurer

Mary Bruno

Artist and printer Mary C. Bruno is dedicated to keeping the tradition of letterpress vibrant and relevant. At Bruno Press, she uses century-old presses to create hand-printed works that connect history, craft, and community. In 2020, she completed *The Scroll*, a 36-foot letterpress piece blending the Rule of Saint Benedict with imagery of monastic life and Minnesota's landscape. The project celebrates faith and storytelling while highlighting the enduring power of print. Mary's work invites audiences to see art as approachable, meaningful, and a vital way to connect with one another.



Jeff Engholm

George Maurer

Pianist, composer, and arranger George Maurer has performed worldwide, sharing the stage with artists like Eric Clapton and Bruno Mars. His work as music director and arranger has been featured by the Minnesota Orchestra, Boston Pops, and National Symphony. Twice honored as a McKnight Composer Fellow, George also finds inspiration traveling the globe by bicycle, where encounters with artists and communities fuel projects like his podcast *Tales from a Bicycle Seat*. His latest work, *Unfrozen*, uses explorers' writings to spark dialogue about climate change through music and theater.

Jeff Engholm

Musician and producer Jeff Engholm is a versatile performer with deep roots in jazz, rock, and classic rock tribute shows. He has played bass with the George Maurer Jazz Group for over 20 years and fronts *Collective Unconscious*, a band known for original albums and live recreations of classics like *Abbey Road* and *Pet Sounds*. Jeff also performs in tributes to the Eagles, Pink Floyd, Fleetwood Mac, and Paul McCartney. Offstage, he engineers and produces music at Rockhouse Studios and continues to release new projects, including a 2025 series of singles.

The background of the entire page is a dark blue gradient. At the top, the company name 'LEIGHTON MEDIA' is written in white. Below it is a horizontal light blue line. The main headline 'MODERN MARKETING WITH A LOCAL TOUCH' is in large, bold, white letters. Underneath the headline is a paragraph of white text. A light blue, paint-splatter-like brushstroke shape contains the paragraph text. At the bottom, a list of services is separated by vertical bars. The very bottom of the page features a graphic of concentric circles representing ripples in water.

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SPEAKERS



Cory Hepola

A three-time Emmy-winning storyteller, Cory Hepola brings small-town America to life through the acclaimed "My Town" documentary series. As Vice President of Communications, Growth, and Strategy at The Brookshire Company, Cory uses narrative to connect people and ideas. Whether on screen or on stage, he is driven by one question: how do we rediscover what matters most in the places we call home?



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Chase Larson

Chase Larson is leading the charge into the future of finance as Executive Vice President and Chief Lending Officer at St. Cloud Financial Credit Union. At the helm of the organization's digital asset strategy, he's shaping how local institutions adapt to the fast-evolving world of cryptocurrency. Named to the St. Cloud Times "5 Under 40" in 2024, Chase blends innovation with community focus in everything he does.



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SPEAKERS



Clare Richards

As CEO and Co-Founder of Impacks, Clare leads a fast-growing startup that bridges gaps in access to school supplies. A community organizer at heart, she's earned national recognition for her leadership, including the 2023 Junior Chamber International's "10 Outstanding Young Americans" award, named to the St. Cloud Times' 5 Under 40 in 2021, and as co-founder of the St. Cloud Rotaract Club in 2015.



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Debra Leigh

Debra Leigh has spent decades igniting change through the arts, education, and equity. Honored with the 2024 Athena Award and the 2023 Mayor's Legacy Award in St. Cloud, she's known for empowering women leaders, advancing anti-racism efforts, and promoting cross-cultural understanding. Her work lives at the intersection of performance and purpose—and she invites others to meet her there.

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SPEAKERS



Jill Blashack Strahan

Jill Blashack Strahan transformed 18 easy-to-prepare food products, packed on a pool table in a shed, into Tastefully Simple, a national brand built on the power of tasting parties. As Founder and CEO, she grew the company from rural Minnesota roots to over \$143 million in sales. Her journey—shaped by bold vision, personal loss, and unshakable grit—inspires others to lead with courage, resilience, and a mindset of abundance.

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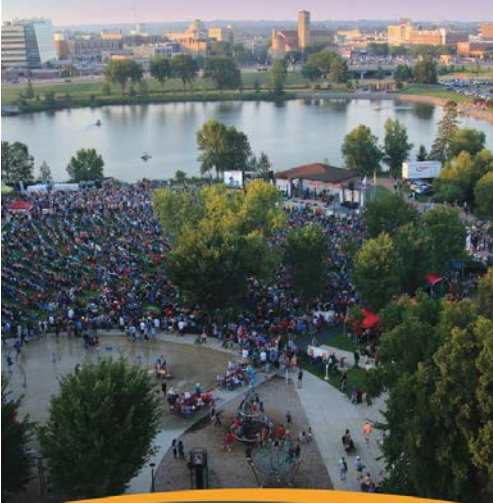


Stephen Rider

Serial entrepreneur, published author, and small business advocate, Stephen co-founded BuzzCare, a rural healthcare logistics startup delivering prescriptions to underserved communities by drone. A passionate champion of rural economic development, Stephen also serves as Small Business Coordinator at the Initiative Foundation where he consults with entrepreneurs, tracks evolving regulations, and meets with communities across a 14 – country region.

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THE RULE OF SAINT BENEDICT SCROLL

on display in Studio C through October

TEDxStCloud is proud to host this breathtaking 36-foot-long work of art, featuring 90 pages of letterpress printed text and more than 18 hand-carved linoleum block images by artist Mary Bruno.

This one-of-a-kind scroll honors the legacy of the Benedictine Sisters and the rich landscape and artistry of Central Minnesota—its flora, fauna, and community spirit pressed into every inch.

About the Artist

For more than 20 years Mary Bruno, owner of Bruno Press, has been creating bold hand-printed art on vintage presses, blending craftsmanship, humor, and heart to preserve the tradition of letterpress printing and to celebrate connection and creativity.

This exhibition is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Central MN Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.



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