FROM THE FORUM · WATERTOWN REGIONAL LIBRARY

Heartland AI Ethics Forum. *The short version.*

The evening that started this work: what was argued, what we committed to, and what you can take home.

WHEN	WHERE	HOSTED BY
Tuesday, April 28, 2026 3:30 to 6:00 PM	**Watertown Regional Library** Watertown, South Dakota	**Liberty Forge AI** with the Watertown community

> *"AI built without values won't grow them."*
>
> That was the argument. The question it leaves: what we do about it, in this town, this week.

Who sat at the table

A moderator, a monastic, an attorney, a scientist, a writer, and a former Google trust-and-safety hand, with a room full of Watertown neighbors. Together they worked five questions:

- **Dignity.** What no pattern can reproduce in a person.
- **Truth.** When the machine is confidently wrong, who checks.
- **Sovereignty.** Whose data it is, and where it lives.
- **Accountability.** Self-rule when no one writes the rules.
- **Calling.** What a family, shop, or school does Monday.

What attendees took home

The **Starter Kit**, to print and use that week:

- The ThinkPad principles and the three convictions
- The four non-negotiable commitments, plus honorable mentions
- The AI Heartland worksheet, half a page
- A talk guide for boards, teams, family tables
- Steps to take this week, and a library of 76 prompts

Four commitments, *forged in.*

The official floor under every engagement, as published on liberty-forge.ai:

01 **Data sovereignty.** On-premises, owner-controlled systems. Your operational data never leaves your custody.

02 **Zero blue-collar layoffs.** In the engagement terms, in writing. AI goes after office overhead, never the production floor.

03 **Human-in-the-lead.** The AI drafts, the owner decides, and the important stuff gets checked.

04 **In-house, client-specific models.** Models tuned on your operations, running on your hardware.

HONORABLE MENTION

Individual consent. Every customer, every record, informed and opted in. No surveillance dressed as service.

Seen & unseen. Bastiat's lens applied to every recommendation. The cost no vendor shows you, we name out loud.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOUR FRIDAY

The forum asked the questions. The clinic is where you answer them for your own operation: you'll write your AI's rules in six lines, keep your files in your own hands, and build one helper you test before you trust.

It drafts. You decide.

Next from the forum. *The Forum Papers.*

Five short papers are on the anvil, one for each question the room worked, in their words where they gave them. Read them as they come out at liberty-forge.ai/papers.html.

Source: official four as published on liberty-forge.ai, read Nov 16, 2026. Honorable mentions as published here and at liberty-forge.ai/heartland.html.

WORDS YOU'LL HEAR · PLAIN DEFINITIONS

An AI glossary for owners. *No jargon inside.*

Words you'll hear at the clinic, in plain English. If one is still fuzzy, stop us and ask.

The basics 01

AI vs **machine learning** AI is software that does work that used to take a person's judgment. Machine learning is the usual way to build it: learn from many examples, not hand-written rules.

Large language model (LLM) An AI that learned from a huge amount of writing, so it can read and write like a person.

Model The engine you rent from the company that built it, like Grok, Claude, ChatGPT, or Copilot.

Prompt and **brief** A prompt is one request. A brief is what you'd tell a new hire: the job, who it's for, the limits, the raw material.

Agent An assistant answers. An agent takes actions, like sending or filing, so it needs tighter rules.

How it works 02

Context Everything the model can see right now. Nothing else exists to it.

Context window How much it can see at once. Past that limit, the oldest parts drop out.

Tokens The small pieces of text it reads and bills by. More context, more tokens.

Training data What the model learned from before you typed a word. **For you:** *Find the setting that adds your chats to it, and switch it off.*

System prompt or **custom instructions** Standing instructions it reads before every chat. **For you:** *Your house rules go here.*

Fine-tuning Extra training that changes the model itself, using your examples. **For you:** *Most owners skip it. A good brief and your files do the job.*

Retrieval (RAG) It looks things up in your files first, then answers from what it found. **For you:** *Fewer made-up answers, not zero.*

Embeddings Text stored as numbers so it can find passages that mean the same thing, even in different words.

Connector or **tool use** A link that lets the AI read or act in another app, like your calendar or email. **For you:** *Give each the least access that does the job.*

MCP A common plug for connectors, so one connector works with many AI apps.

WORDS YOU'LL HEAR · PLAIN DEFINITIONS, CONTINUED

An AI glossary for owners. *Continued.*

The rest of the words you'll hear at the clinic, in plain English.

Where it goes wrong 03

Hallucination A confident answer it made up: fluent, specific, and wrong. **For you:** *Check names, numbers, and sources before anything goes out.*

Bias Answers that lean unfairly, often because the training data did. **For you:** *It may draft a job post. It never picks who gets hired.*

Human in the lead A person approves before anything leaves the building. **For you:** *It drafts. You decide.*

Your AI's constitution Your AI's written rules: what it may do, what it must never do, and who signs off. **For you:** *You write yours on Friday.*

Running it yourself 04

Local vs **hosted** Local runs on your own machine. Hosted runs on someone else's server, and your words travel there.

Open-weight model A model whose files are published, so you can download it and run it locally.

Data custody Who holds your data and decides where it goes. Some call it data sovereignty. **For you:** *Our promise: it stays in your custody.*

Harness Your rules, memory, and look, kept in files you own. It hitches to any model. **For you:** *Rent the horse. Own the harness.*