

MONTANA KAIMIN



HANDLING THE HEAT

Story by Aidan Graham | Photos by Embry Ericson

Amid closing businesses, rising costs and a shifting culture, Missoula cooks and restaurants persevere while facing economic pressure.

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12 Style of the season

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The Montana Kaimin is a weekly independent student newspaper at the University of Montana. The Kaimin office and the University of Montana are located on land originally inhabited by the Salish People. Kaimin is a derivative of a Salish language word, "Qe'ymin," that is pronounced kay-MEEN and means "book," "message" or "paper that brings news."

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KAIMIN KOMICS: #5 SUPPORT LOCAL ARTISTS



ALYSSA JO MURNION | CARTOONIST

A'26

Modern horror is over-hyped

There's a recurring sentiment online that "horror is back," but I don't think horror ever went away, and I don't think the horror coming out now is really redefining the genre.

Last week, I went to watch the new "Resident Evil" movie. Tucked into a small movie theater, cherry slushie in hand, I was beyond excited to watch because I'm a huge fan of the franchise and users all over social media said it was great.

I left the theater disappointed, and frankly, a little annoyed.

The film started strong. We followed an out-of-his-depth main character through the beginning of a zombie apocalypse. I was scared enough to hide in my hoodie and barely dared to peek out from underneath it. Then, like other recent horror films, it started falling off at the halfway point — the previously relatable protagonist becomes cartoonishly stupid and the scares become obvious — and by the end of the movie, I was left dissatisfied.

It's easy to make something scary, easy to have a horrifying ball of humans that follows the protagonist around like in "Resident Evil." I was scared watching it, and at times amused or enthralled, but I did not reach the emotional depths promised by the reviews online.

Horror often explores societal fears and insecurities of the time. "Godzilla" explored the fear of nuclear radiation, and "The Texas Chain Saw Massacre" is a response to the rise of violent crime in the '70s.

I can see what movies like "Obsession" and "Resident Evil" are saying about autonomy in modern relationships or disease. However, I don't think the way we talk about these movies contributes much to the broader social conversation. It ends up "good" because it's scary, the acting is good or the aesthetics of it are good. When it comes to what it's actually telling us about who we are, the conversation is stale or nonexistent. I want us to talk about what these movies are really saying and why they are saying it right now. We need to be critical, and the genre deserves that level of critique.

While these recent horror releases aren't bad, they are not as revolutionary

as they are made out to be. I love horror, and I think we can expect more from the genre, but we can also let movies just be pretty good without a months-long online discussion about obvious allegories in the film.

Since the conception of the horror movie, there have been so many amazing movies worth the hype that they are receiving, movies that have opened the door for these discussions.

For better movies to be made, we need to be having better discussions about them. I just hope that next time I see a hyped horror movie, I can leave the theater feeling satisfied.

- Caydence Martin, digital editor
Like it? Hate it? Let us know.

Email us your opinions at
henry.doellinger@umontana.edu

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

7	9						3	
	6				8	2		5
				9	6			
		1			4			
8				2				3
	2		8				7	
	4					6		
9		7	4				2	
		5	2	1		9		

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Edited by Margie E. Burke

HOW TO SOLVE:

Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

7	4	8	3	1	2	6	5	9
2	1	9	8	5	6	4	7	3
3	6	5	4	9	7	2	1	8
9	8	6	5	4	3	1	2	7
4	3	7	2	6	1	8	9	5
5	2	1	9	7	8	3	6	4
8	7	3	1	2	9	5	4	6
1	9	4	6	3	5	7	8	2
6	5	2	7	8	4	9	3	1

Tired on the pitch



University of Montana men's club soccer player Zollie Friedman lies on the ground during a match at Fort Missoula on Sept. 27. EMBRY ERICSON | MONTANA KAIMIN

In local news...

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MISSOULA LIBRARY WEIGHS CUTS AMID BUDGET DEFICIT

The Missoula Public Library may begin closing its main building two hours earlier on Mondays and closing entirely on Sundays to combat its \$400,000 budget deficit.

The library is also considering closing its Frenchtown branch entirely, according to NBC Montana. Library director Slaven Lee said these changes could save \$200,000 over the next year.

Lee explained that recent tax revenue has been lower than expected and that the library's funding has remained largely unchanged since a 2006 mill levy passed for \$995,000.

"We can hopefully start putting money back in our reserves and then we put some money back toward our collection, because the collection budget, books, material, etc., as we know was cut by \$153,000 this year," Lee told NBC Montana.

Closing the Frenchtown branch would save around \$70,000 every year, but could involve layoffs. The decrease in hours at the main location wouldn't provide any savings immediately, and staffing would remain the same, but the change could begin to save money over time by slowly diminishing staff.

The library plans to give staff the option to reduce their hours from 40 to 32 per week if they so choose.

Alex Beal, who serves on the library's board of trustees, said that the board would prefer not to make the cuts to begin with.

"If we could find things, other ways to cut, that would provide the same financial benefit to get us through this period, without having to cut positions, without having to cut hours, that sounds so much better," he said to NBC Montana. "But in the absence of that, I'm not really sure what plan B is."

The possibility of a new mill levy could also help with funding, and the library hopes to propose one for 2028. A meeting for the proposal is scheduled for Oct. 28.

MISSOULA PUBLIC HEALTH OFFERS SEASONAL VACCINE OPTIONS

Missoula Public Health announced Monday that it plans to host a number of COVID-19 and flu vaccine clinics around the county throughout the month of October.

The clinics operate as first-come first-serve, offering exclusively flu and COVID-19 vaccines, according to Missoula Public Health. They will require patients to bring both insurance cards and photo identification if possible, but variable pricing is also available for those without insurance.

"Flu and COVID vaccines are one of the best ways to help keep you and your loved ones healthy during the upcoming respiratory season," Sara Heineman, who serves as health services director for Missoula Public Health, stated in the announcement. "In addition to handwashing and staying home when you're sick, we encourage everyone to get vaccinated."

The clinics will run from 3-6 p.m. with the first being held today at Swan Valley Elementary School on Oct. 1 and the last scheduled for Oct. 28 at the Exploration Center.

Missoula Public Health also offers seasonal vaccines at its downtown location, which is available for walk-ins on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, with room for scheduled appointments on Wednesdays.

MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION VOTES TO DRAFT PREDATOR MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission voted to adopt a new predator management policy Sept. 24 following a discussion about the needs of the department.

Commissioner Ian Wargo had proposed a predator management policy for Fish, Wildlife and Parks which was made public earlier in September, according to Missoula Current. He said the department would benefit from "a more deliberate framework" surrounding predator management.

The commission discussed his proposal and ultimately voted to have the department draft such a framework with a few caveats.

"I would not be in support of something that would tie our hands," Commission chair Lesley Robinson said. "So even if we have metrics, we still have to look at the big picture."

Several other commissioners agreed that a more specific management policy was necessary, but also wanted one flexible enough to reflect the issues that face specific Montana ecosystems.



CONTRIBUTED | UM MARKETING

This week on the Kaimin Cast ...

The Kaimin Cast is changing things up a bit.

Starting this week, we will be publishing episodes made by University of Montana journalism students in the advanced audio capstone class last spring. The Good Bones Project tells the stories of found bones across Montana. These episodes will run two weeks in a row, followed by a regular episode for the rest of this semester.

The first episode follows University of Montana alum Haley Omeasoo, who found a Blackfeet woman's remains in a closet of bones on campus while she was a student. The discovery launched her into a search for why the bones are still here despite the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act, or NAGPRA, a federal law requiring Indigenous remains be returned to the tribe, and where they belong.

"All federally funded institutions are supposed to pull Native remains out of their general collections and repatriate or rematriate them. So I was like, 'Okay, well, why haven't they?'" Omeasoo said.

Check out this week's episode of the Good Bones series, "Student discovers Indigenous remains at her university," by graduate Lily Meskers, at our website, montanakaimin.com, or wherever you find your podcasts.

- Grace Golbach,
audio editor



New Kaimin Cast
episode out this
week. Stay tuned.
Scan for the latest



FBI CO-DEPUTY DIRECTOR RESIGNS

FBI co-deputy director Andrew Bailey announced his resignation on Monday, just a year after being appointed to his position.

"With great pride in what we have accomplished, I am announcing that I am stepping down to return to my family in Missouri," Bailey stated in a social media post.

Bailey was hired in September 2025 in an unusual decision to have him work with Dan Bogino as co-deputy directors, according to NBC. Bogino then announced his resignation in December 2025, less than a year after he was given the position, and was replaced by Bailey's new co-deputy director Chris Raia.

Previously, Bailey had worked as the attorney general of Missouri before resigning to join the FBI, and stated that the bureau had achieved "historic results in our mission to Make America Safe Again" in his post.

"I am confident Director Patel will continue to reform the FBI, combat violent crime, defend the homeland, ensure strong organizational accountability and restore public trust in this institution of excellence," he continued in the post.

US AND CHINA REACH AGREEMENT TO CUT TARIFFS

The United States and China have agreed to cut tariffs on \$60 billion worth of goods following a visit to Washington by Chinese president Xi Jinping last week.

The two countries announced separate lists of goods, amounting to \$30 billion each, that they plan to cut tariffs on in an attempt to repair trade relations, according to The New York Times.

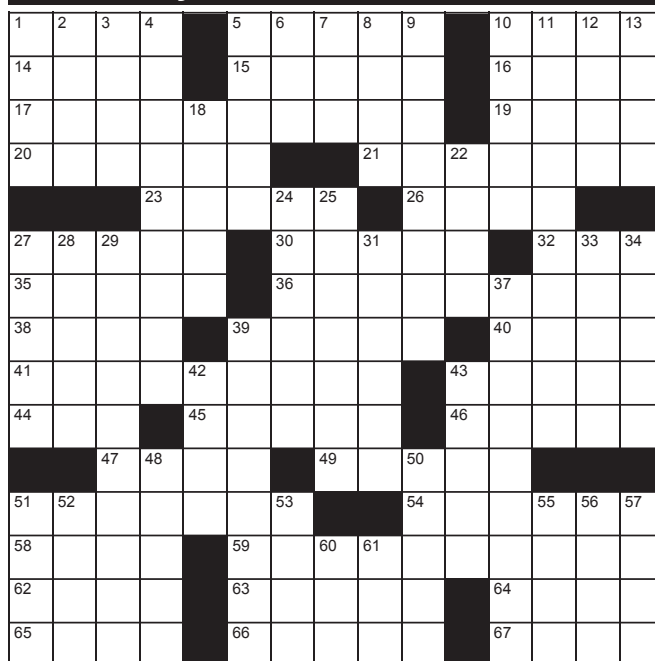
China's list outlined 1,619 products, including medical devices like X-ray machines, surgical robots and pacemakers, live animals such as dugongs and whales, frozen meat from reptiles and primates, and agricultural goods.

The U.S. listed 77 items, including outdoor recreation goods like fishing hooks and clay pigeons, home appliances, tableware, Christmas ornaments and car seats.

Neither country listed any items that their governments deem sensitive, such as rare earth minerals, or technologies related to advancing artificial intelligence.

Jamieson Greer, who serves as the U.S. trade representative, said that the cuts are part of a new Board of Trade between the countries which would make imports more accessible for both sides.

China's Ministry of Commerce released a statement saying that the agreement would "help to stabilize China-U.S. trade" and "strengthen trade cooperation."



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- 1 Top of the line
5 Photo keeper
10 "Fernando" singers
14 Plane measure
15 Jennifer's co-star on "The Morning Show"
16 Surrealist Salvador
17 Like unfulfilled orders
19 Mineral salt
20 Think highly of
21 Gentle waves
23 ____garde
26 Mambo king Puente
27 Woodshop machine
30 "We ____ an impasse"
32 Part of IOU
35 Benefit
36 Browned at the beach
38 Classic board game
39 Bell sound
40 Helpers
41 Castle entry, often
43 Jessica with two Oscars
44 It's next to nothing
45 Islamic prayer leaders
46 One of Charlie's trio
47 Cannes showing
49 Arboretum item
51 Took a tally
54 Rocky's girl
- 58 Guard's command
59 Strictly business
62 Capri, for one
63 Hollywood's Eastwood
64 Makes a scene?
65 IM sign-off
66 Cultural values
67 Speaker's place
- DOWN
1 Paul Bunyan's ox
2 Historic periods
3 Small faction
4 "Get lost!"
5 Bakery lure
6 Race part
7 Panhandle
8 Ruse anagram
9 Practice Zen
10 Grow accustomed
11 Airborne activity
12 Cookie
13 Draws a bead on
- 18 Carpenter's tool
22 Fillable bread
24 New Hampshire city
25 Obvious sayings
27 Key in a Bogart film
28 Concerning birds
29 Stylishly
31 Catch, as in a net
33 Caddie's offering
34 Bygone auto
37 Tandoor offering
39 Get started
42 Sword handle
43 Gives praise
48 Chip maker
50 Carries on
51 Promissory note
52 Brewer's kiln
53 Airhead
55 Ancient Andean
56 ____ Spumante
57 1987 Costner role
60 Med. research agcy.
61 Yoko ____

Answers to Previous Crossword:

S	T	A	G	T	A	U	P	E	S	L	A	V
L	U	R	E	A	B	N	E	R	M	I	M	I
A	B	B	R	N	A	R	R	A	T	I	V	E
W	A	I	T	E	C	O	M	E	L	E	N	A
C	A	R	U	S	O	L	A	M	E	D	S	
L	O	A	D	E	R	S	T	E	P	S	P	A
A	N	T	E	N	N	A	E	N	A	B	L	E
D	E	E	H	E	N	S	S	T	R	I	C	T
			C	O	A	T	I	C	H	U	N	K
S	T	R	A	W	I	T	C	H	I	N	G	
O	H	A	R	E	D	U	O	C	E	S	A	R
F	I	B	E	R	B	O	A	R	D	T	H	R
I	R	I	S	O	T	T	E	R	T	O	M	B
A	D	D	S	B	E	E	R	S	E	T	S	Y

PBS Kids-o-scope

NIAMH O'FARRELL | ARTS & CULTURE REPORTER

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It's Saturday morning! You run downstairs, fill a bowl of cereal and sit yourself in front of the TV. Cable is overrated. It's time to see what the Public Broadcasting Service has to offer today, all thanks to viewers like you!

LIBRA (SEP. 23-OCT. 22): "Super Why." You are one smart cookie. You and your friends are always running around trying to fix problems and make things better for everybody. But don't forget to take time and look out for yourself. You matter just as much, after all!

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21): "Word Girl." Your intellect knows no bounds. Like our beloved Word Girl, you're always trying to make the world a better and more articulate place. But sometimes you'll find yourself in messes that can't be avoided. Keep your head up, there's no challenge you can't face!

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21): "Martha Speaks." If there's one thing you love to do, it's speaking. You always have great things to say and love for people to hear your voice. Just make sure other people get their turn as well.

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19): "Sesame Street." You DON'T need to tell us how to get to Sesame Street, because Capricorn, you've been the life of the party these last couple of weeks. Just like the show, your friends learn a lot from you. They learn everything from how to stand up for themselves all the way to how to be a good friend. Shout out to you, Capricorn.

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18): "Zoboomafoo." You're an oldie but a goodie. You might fly under the radar sometimes, but the people who truly know you are ride or die. You're a cult classic, and your comeback is just around the corner, I can feel it.

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20): "Cyber Chase." You are devoted to the end. Your circle is close and loyal, you don't have time for romance. You and your friends have problems to solve! GET BACK TO IT, PISCES!

ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19): "Dragon Tales." Nothing is more important to you than family. Not just the one you were born into, but found family as well. You're always looking out for others and making people feel as included as possible. Keep shining your light with the people around you.

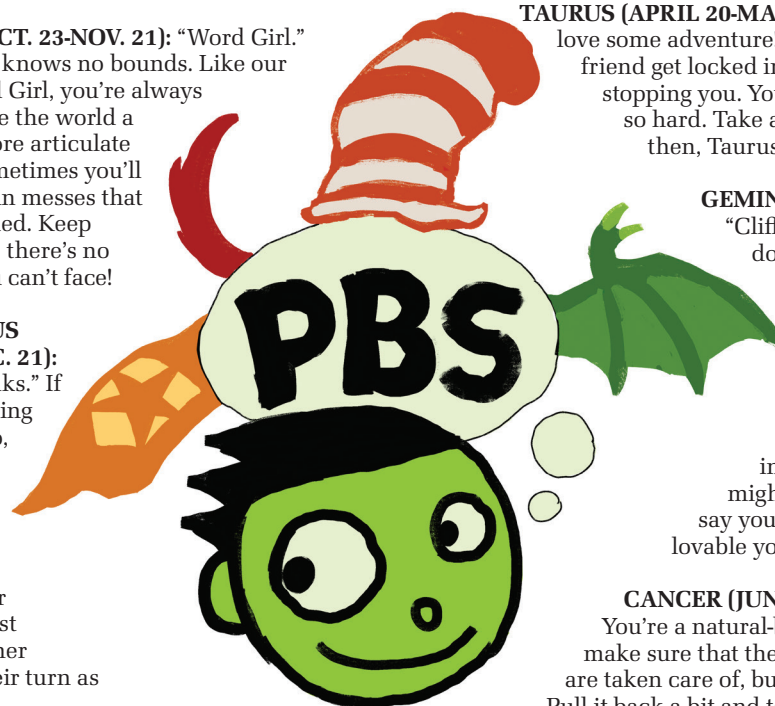
TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20): "Wild Krats." You love some adventure! When you and your best friend get locked in on something, there's no stopping you. You care so much and work so hard. Take a break every now and then, Taurus.

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20): "Clifford the Big Red Dog." You dominate every space you're in. You're always making sure your friends and family are safe and taken care of. Just make sure you're putting the same amount of time and care into yourself. Some people might call you self-centered, I say you're selfless. Keep being the lovable you we all know!

CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22): "Arthur." You're a natural-born leader. You want to make sure that the people younger than you are taken care of, but you can be a little harsh. Pull it back a bit and take a chill pill. No need to ball up those fists.

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22): "Sid the Science Kid." You are the nerdiest of nerds in the best way possible. You love to dig in the dirt and learn as much as you possibly can. You've got style and brains that most people take their whole lives to find. It's your world, we're just living in it!

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 22): "Dinosaur Train." You're just such a classic. Your taste is unmatched, and you can find the beauty in anything. Your dream is to explore as much as humanly possible. Even if it might scare you, staying still will scare you more. Get out there, the world is waiting!



ALYSSA JO MURNION | CARTOONIST

Central and Southwest Asian studies removes language requirements

JOCelyn HOOD | NEWS REPORTER

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The requirements for the Central and Southwest Asian studies major changed this semester, no longer requiring two years of a language because of recent cuts to language programs.

Central and Southwest Asian studies, the only bachelor's program in the United States of that title, used to require two years and strongly encouraged four years of Arabic, Chinese, Farsi or Russian. Now, students only have to take one semester of Russian. Mehrdad Kia, a co-director and professor of the program and professor of history, said that this change is due to the recent cuts that the University of Montana has made to language offerings.

In 2026, the Chinese minor was put in moratorium and the Irish studies minor was cut. The Arabic studies minor and Farsi courses have also been cut.

The languages currently offered at UM are French, German, Latin, Russian, Japanese and Spanish.

"It's a huge blow not to have languages," Mehrdad Kia said. "I think it's a huge reduction of all credibility."

He said that having knowledge of other languages increases the job marketability of students because the countries he teaches about are "emerging powers," and employers are looking for globally literate people to send abroad.

Ardi Kia, a professor of Central and Southwest Asian studies, anthropology and a co-director of the program with his brother Mehrdad Kia, said it "is so crucial, so important, to have experts that know the languages of these people" because Eurasia is over two times the size of North America.

However, Ardi and Mehrdad Kia hope that the major requirement changes will bring more students to the program.

They said there are two new three-credit 300-level courses: Media, Culture and Society in the Arab World and Conflict and Diplomacy in the Arab World.

"We expanded the menu and the options for students," said Mehrdad Kia, adding that it's now easier for students to choose a specific area of interest in Central and Southwest Asia to focus on.

He also said that they increased the required credits in the lower-division courses to 12 and added the first four semesters of Russian language courses as options to fulfill them.

"This is an advantage because it keeps the program attractive as a double major for students majoring in Russian," Mehrdad Kia said.



Ardi Kia, co-director of the Central and Southwest Asian studies program, goes over the final writing project for his class, The Silk Road, on Sept. 22 in Stone Hall.

MARS JOHNSON | MONTANA KAIMIN

Jack Smart, a 22-year-old senior history major and Central and Southwest Asian studies minor from Missoula, said UM cutting language programs is upsetting.

"I think having knowledge of a world language and the culture attached to it is incredibly important for understanding the cultural significance of the history you're learning as well," Smart said.

Smart took two semesters of Arabic last year, before UM stopped offering the courses. As a summer camp counselor, he was able to use his knowledge of Arabic to communicate with a camper who was a Syrian immigrant.

Now, he said he is struggling to keep up with learning the language.

"In theory, me and my classmates from last semester were going to group together and hold each other accountable to learn," Smart said. "We haven't done that. It's difficult to organize."

Ann Marie Carbin, an 86-year-old interdisciplinary master's student from Chicago, who has taken many of Mehrdad and Ardi Kia's courses said she thinks UM's lack of interest in languages is "highly regrettable."

Carbin studied French, Spanish and Arabic during her education. She is fluent in Chinese and currently has an Arabic tutor. She said that if Central and Southwest Asian studies had a master's program, she would be doing that instead.

"The world is very small and it's inevitable that we will meet people that we'd like to be friends with, but if we don't have any knowledge of their language, then what comes up is that language barrier. I think that limits our ability to cross cultural bridges," Carbin said.

Mehrdad Kia said he thinks the decisions about cuts boil down to enrollment numbers.

"I cannot believe that there are no more creative ways of thinking about how to preserve things rather than cut things," he said. "It's a pen and it's a budget sheet."

He said that while the Central and Southwest Asian studies program is entirely self-funded and doesn't receive any money from UM, his and Ardi Kia's salaries are university-funded, and he said he hopes UM doesn't see their jobs as a budget-balancing opportunity.

Mehrdad Kia said that world language and culture programs bring in money from international students, even if they don't bring as much general enrollment as some science, technology, engineering and math programs.

"It makes the University much more attractive to international students who pay out-of-state tuition, which will help us balance our budget," he said. "Without them, without that revenue base, we will continue to cut."

Out-of-state students pay over \$26,000 more per year in tuition than in-state students, according to UM's website.

Tyler Worm, a 37-year-old UM alum who received a bachelor's in history, a post-baccalaureate in Central and Southwest Asian Studies and a master's degree in interdisciplinary studies, said he is disappointed that Montana State University, an engineering and agriculture school, has been expanding its humanities department while UM has cut humanities.

MSU offers Japanese, Chinese, French, Spanish and German language courses.

"It's hurting our image of the University of Montana because that's what this was," Worm said. "This was founded as a liberal

UM uses Brick to combat phone addiction

CORBIN VANDERBY | NEWS REPORTER
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The University of Montana Curry Health Center bought 125 Brick devices, which can temporarily block distracting apps, to help students fight unhealthy relationships with their phones.

After downloading the companion app, students can set barriers for whatever apps give them the most trouble. Then, after tapping the phone to the little gray square, these apps are “bricked” and unable to be used until tapped again. But calls, texts and GPS do remain active.

Two years ago, Anne Poole would sit down on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays to study for her chemistry final. Poole was a freshman forestry major and she needed to do well in order to get the general education credit and move on in her degree.

Then her phone buzzed. It was a message from a friend. She sent one back, and then she scrolled.

“I knew I should have been studying, but I just kept saying, ‘Oh, five more minutes, 10 more minutes, and then a half hour had passed, and I didn’t get anything done,’” Poole said.

With one of the University of Montana’s new Brick devices, Poole may have had an easier time studying that night. The director of counseling services at UM, Erinn Guzik, said nights like this are why they brought in Brick.

“We were hearing from students who wanted to be more intentional about their phone use, whether because it was interfering with sleep, studying, connecting with other people or simply being present,” Guzik stated in an email to the Kaimin.

Guzik called the program “Be Here with Brick,” which was funded by \$6,800 from UM’s Flagship Fund. Starting this semester, there are multiple Brick stations across campus in places like the residence halls, the University Center and the library. Students are also able to loan their own Brick device for free through the Curry Health Center’s Semester Brick Loan Program.

“Brick appealed to us because it doesn’t ask students to give up their phones,” Guzik said. “It gives them a tool to decide when they want some distance from distracting apps and notifications.”

Poole hadn’t heard of these devices back in her freshman year when she was

studying for the chemistry final, but said they would have helped. She said that with studying, the hardest part is just starting.

“Once you’ve been studying for 10, 15 minutes, you’re in it — you’re looking at your notes, you’re doing what you’re supposed to do,” Poole said. “But it’s that switch that can be hard, so having a tool that makes that transition easier would definitely be useful.”

Poole liked that the device could only be activated intentionally as she often needs her phone for important class updates and family emergencies. But it’s also this idea that makes putting the phone down so difficult.

“The expectation to be available constantly, that you can answer phone calls, answer texts, emails like at the drop of a hat is what makes me struggle with my phone,” Poole said.

About 85% of students who replied to an Instagram poll by the Montana Kaimin said they too struggle with phone and social media addiction.

The issue is also widespread across the country. A 2025 National Institutes of Health survey showed that 60% of college students admit experiencing phone addiction.

“Research has associated problematic or high-frequency smartphone use with concerns including sleep disruption, stress, poorer wellbeing and difficulties with attention,” Guzik stated. “We also hear directly from students who feel their own phone habits sometimes interfere with sleep, focus or connecting with other people.”

Multiple National Institutes of Health studies back this up, citing that blue light screens reduce sleep and social media sometimes causes increased stress and anxiety. In fact, in March, a Los Angeles jury ordered Meta and Google to pay \$6 million in a class action lawsuit for designing purposefully addictive features in their social media.

In August, Montana joined a multi-state lawsuit against Meta for features made to hook minors, which won a total of \$17 billion. Montana was guaranteed \$89 million.

Still, Guzik and Poole don’t necessarily see smartphones as the bad guys.

“The most important thing I’d want students to understand is that “Be Here with Brick” isn’t an anti-phone initiative,” Guzik stated. “It’s really about intentionality.”



Brick stations, like the one in the University Center Commons, allow disabling of user-selected phone apps.
MARS JOHNSON | MONTANA KAIMIN



Best Beginnings



**NEED HELP
PAYING FOR
CHILD CARE?**

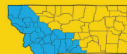
We can help.

The **Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program** helps eligible families pay for child care.

The application has moved online to the new **Montana Access to Quality Child Care System (MAQCS)**.

Child Care Resources can:

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HANDLING THE HEAT

Amid closing businesses, rising costs and a shifting culture, Missoula cooks and restaurants persevere while under economic pressure.

Story by Aidan Graham | Photos by Embry Ericson

On any given day, customers at Basecamp, one of downtown Missoula's most popular coffee shops, can find a six-person crew working the granite counters and stainless steel espresso machine from 6 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Tattooed in laid-back fashion styles, not one member of the team is older than 30. Sharing a bond forged by the pressures only found in food service, they are not only coworkers, but a self-described close group of friends. However, each cup poured and each pastry sold brings them closer to the last one served: The business announced its closure on Oct. 4.

Basecamp will be one of eight food and beverage closures in Missoula since January, according to data from the Downtown Missoula Partnership. The cafe's closure follows the loss of James Bar in July, a staple of Missoula's downtown since 2007, and the notable closing of the Pangea Restaurant Group in April.

For Basecamp's workers, finding jobs in an already struggling industry entering its slowest season has already proven difficult.

"It's hard to turn away from it (the food industry) when my only experience is being a barista," Basecamp barista Allison Phillips said. Phillips, a 22-year-old student studying forensic anthropology at the University of Montana, has worked at Basecamp since 2024 to support her education.

"I think I am going to stay in the service industry, but if there was a better opportunity for me, I'd take it," Phillips said. She said many of the cafe's full-time workers losing benefits have been forced to look at taking multiple jobs just to get by.

The restaurant industry is no stranger to

thin margins. However, a struggling U.S. economy is negatively impacting profits. Additionally, shifts in dining culture and alcohol consumption have shrunk essential financial padding. Despite this, many of these businesses are working to manage, while their workers try to stay positive.

"It's [still] a viable option," 28-year-old Cade Chastain said on the state of the industry. Chastain, a local musician from Palmer, Alaska, works at Basecamp full time to support his craft and has worked in Missoula's food service industry for over five years. "But finding a job that really provides stability to build a life around is like a needle in a haystack."

LOCALLY SOURCED

This is not the first time Chastain has been laid off. In 2024, he worked as an espresso machine technician for Hero Coffee Works, servicing equipment across Missoula. As the company approached its closing date, Chastain said four of his paychecks bounced before the business shuttered altogether, putting him out of thousands of dollars.

"The company stretched themselves way too thin trying to maintain deals," Chastain said.

According to Chastain and Phillips, the Basecamp team was informed of the business's closure on Sept. 11. Both stated they'd been informed that Columbia Hospitality, the cafe's parent company, chose to close the shop in favor of leasing the space to another business. Traditionally, leasing a space to a separate business acts

as a more stable form of income than managing it. However, Columbia Hospitality could not be reached for comment on the decision in time for publication.

While Missoula's downtown has a number of commercial spaces for purchase or lease, those set up for dining services seemingly get little traction.

The Conflux Brewery building, for example, has remained available for purchase or lease since the business of the same name closed in May 2025. The building remains on the market for \$5.75 million, while offering the option to lease for a total of \$290,360 a year. The prior owners of the business, or representatives of the company, have not given public comment on the closure and could not be reached for comment.

Recent hits to the industry also include the closure of the Pangea Restaurant Group in April. The business, which filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, left dozens of Missoulians out of work. The group's central property, including both the Pangea restaurant and Stave and Hoop Speakeasy on Higgins Avenue, was listed for sale in May for \$3.3 million. The property is also selling its liquor license for \$1.4 million. It has remained on the market since.

According to the Downtown Missoula Partnership, 64% of food and beverage closures since 2008 have happened in the last seven years. Additionally, 2026 is shaping up to have the second-highest number of closures in the last two decades. The largest number of food and beverage closures was in 2023, with 10 total closures.

Linda McCarthy, executive director of the Missoula Downtown Association, cited rising property and property management costs as a major local factor. Data from LoopNet, a commercial real estate platform publishing market trend reports, places the average purchase price for a commercial business in Missoula's downtown at over \$5 million. Additionally, median property prices for commercial spaces have increased 25% since 2024.

Rising property values, alongside property taxes, have placed a heavy financial burden on property owners. Restaurant businesses, on the other hand, are forced to face rising rental rates from leasing properties.

"It's hard not to be cynical," said Philip Schaefer, 40, co-owner of The Camino, a Mexican restaurant downtown. Originally from Missouri, Schaefer has worked in the industry for over 18 years. "I really hope that the restaurant scene and culture can thrive in spite of all this, but it's really tough, and it doesn't look too encouraging down the road."

OUT OF THE FRYING PAN

Schaefer came up with the concept of The Camino with his business partner, Tad Hilton, while working at Montgomery Distillery in the mid-2010s. The plan: to create a restaurant honest to traditional



Cade Chastain makes coffee in his basement apartment on Sept. 26.

Mexican cooking and techniques as an "exploration, a desire to step outside ourselves and learn at the feet of others," according to its website. Traveling across Mexico and South America, the duo studied the cuisine for several years before bringing the idea to life. With assistance from the Missoula County Commissioners, they were approved for a \$159,000 economic development loan to set up their restaurant on the ground floor of Missoula Mercantile.

The business opened in November 2019 and gained steady traction. According to Schaefer, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, the two applied for a number of small business loans to keep the business afloat. Schaefer refused to disclose the total cost of loans.

The struggles only continued from there, with the increasing cost of ingredients, imports and staffing a constant battle.

"We're constantly trying to squeeze every drop out of the business without shaving down the integrity of the product," Schaefer said.

Restaurants nationwide have faced soaring operating and labor costs, along with skyrocketing food costs, since the pandemic. According to the National Restaurant Association, the cost of food and ingredients has risen roughly 35% compared to pre-pandemic levels.



Matt Doss, an employee of The Camino, sits for a portrait at his place of work on Sept. 23.



Cook Seth Morgan works in the kitchen of The Camino on Sept. 23.

Additionally, labor costs have surged more than 39%, forcing businesses to balance hours and payroll to manage overhead costs.

"I wish I could say I could see something is really going to change those pressures, but right now I don't," Jeffrey Michael, an economic analyst, said. Michael is the director of the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Montana, with decades of experience in regional economic forecasting.

Michael cited inflation as a major driver of industry struggles. "Food and those areas have been hit heavily by inflation," he said. "A lot of employers are dealing with that, alongside health insurance, employee benefits — they've been hitting higher costs. That's not unique to the restaurant industry."

While food service has always been a challenging sector running on tight margins, typical fallbacks have been less reliable.

"A number of consumer trends are also hitting them," Michael said. "There's been a downward trend in alcohol consumption. That's always been a solid revenue source with a higher profit margin than food."

A 2025 study from Gallup News found that drinking among U.S. adults has dropped over 8% since 2023. Cost was a major factor, according to the study, with the average price of alcohol rising 25.2% in the last decade. It also cited greater health concerns among U.S. adults, alongside a shift away from drinking among Millennials and Gen Z. For restaurants, losing drink sales removes a critical buffer against overhead and labor expenses.

While Michael forecasts lasting effects on the industry, he believes it will continue

to move forward. "This is not necessarily a short-term challenge, but this is not a sector that's going to disappear."

The numbers may predict greater struggles ahead, but some who make a livelihood from the craft stare at this oncoming storm with resilience and optimism.

BEHIND THE STOVE

Controlled chaos is the only term that could describe a kitchen during a rush, and The Camino's kitchen is no different.

Among black marble, the sizzle of open flames and a cacophony of "behind" and "heard," stands 22-year-old line cook Matt Doss. While The Camino's open-kitchen design might make anyone feel like they're in a fish bowl, Doss is in his element.

Doss, born in Houston, Texas, and raised in Bozeman, has worked in kitchens since he was 17. Originally a student at the University of Montana, Doss dropped out of the audio production program to pursue the culinary field full time.

"It's really not an industry where you make a bunch of money," Doss said. "I feel like it's one of those things where it's passion first and then money later."

From humble beginnings as a dishwasher, with The Camino's support, Doss has worked toward a career as a chef. He shared an optimistic outlook on the industry's future.

"I honestly think things are going to get better. I think right now is an especially hard time to keep things going, just because of money problems and everything changing. But I think, for my career, it's still

very possible to move up and be able to learn as much as possible," he said.

According to Doss, the food industry requires a level of resilience you don't find in many careers. From his perspective, the industry will keep shifting and changing, but will ultimately pull through.

"I don't necessarily think it's getting much harder. I think it's just different," Doss said. "Now is one of the hardest times to keep these businesses open. The restaurants here are closing at a rapid pace. But that's always something to be worried about. It just seems more visible and prominent right now."

KEEPING THE DOORS OPEN

Within the business itself, Schaefer says the current goal is to keep margins at a baseline. While economic impacts continue, management's aim is to operate while keeping prices as low as possible.

"We have to maintain certain prices on the menu, and we don't want to raise those too much. But we can't lose money on the product that we're offering. There's the psychological gap. You don't want to spend \$9 on a taco. I don't want to sell a taco for \$9," Schaefer said.

Additionally, Schaefer said increasing efficiency in the kitchen as a future goal. A stronger crew, to Schaefer, would let him schedule a smaller crew on the line at one time, reducing payroll costs.

"We're always looking at what the cost of something is and where we can find it cheaper without shaving the integrity of the product down," Schaefer said. "If anything, we've just found more creative ways to incorporate that quality.

Today, when attracting customers, other aspects must be considered beyond what's being served. According to 2023 insights from The Sustainable Restaurant Association, successful modern dining has made a shift toward a more social or "third space" model. These environments encourage a more social aspect and a space to spend time outside of work or home, while also creating a rapport between staff and guests.

"You just have to have a sense of community," Doss said. "People have to want to eat there, and it's not just the food, it's the environment. You go to a restaurant, you can tell how much people care to give you good service, and that partly comes from how you get treated in the restaurant."

While some attempt to hang on through the twists and turns the industry faces, others have chosen to leave it altogether.

Back at Basecamp, Chastain said the state of the industry has left him fed up, but introduced him to new opportunities.

"My choice now is to do music full time and not split any of my time with any food service job," Chastain said. "I don't want to work in food service anymore because the work is challenging, draining and forces you to become a different person to perform the necessary tasks."

Chastain and Phillips both corroborated many of the remaining Basecamp crew's plans to stay in the food industry for the foreseeable future.

Food and hospitality have been managed through tight margins, low profits and struggling economies. While the economic outlook across many industries may seem bleak, those who love the craft of cooking will weather the storm and keep practicing.

Arts | What's in your closet

NIAMH O'FARREL | ARTS REPORTER

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Summer is coming to a close: the leaves are changing and the air is crisper. Now's the time to put the shorts away and break out the sweaters! If you're tired of the same fall outfits season after season, here are some upgrades you can add to your closet this year.

Keep It Flowing

Don't think cold weather means you have to put away your fun, flowy clothes. That long white skirt you've been pairing with a tube top all summer doesn't have to hibernate just yet. Pair those long skirts with a sweater and a belt to make your fun summer outfit cute and professional. A loose button-down shirt you might have gone to the beach with can pair great with jeans or some khaki pants. These outfits are low maintenance and will fit great with the changing season.

Baggy Long Sleeves

Hear me out, long sleeves are a big fall staple, but we have a spin on it this year: raglan shirts, those white shirts with a colorful collar and sleeves. Pair them with jean skirts or camouflage pants to take the classic baseball tee design and make it a laid-back outfit for any occasion. Waffle knits are another great addition to your fall wardrobe. Both shirts pair well if you love to layer. Throw a graphic tee on top of either long-sleeve, and you've got a fun fall outfit.

Windbreakers

Another beloved middle school fashion trend is making a comeback this fall: the windbreaker. Baby blue and yellow windbreakers with some black piping are a great way to keep yourself warm, and to keep the rain off of your cute outfit. Pair them with some baggy or dark colored bottoms, throw in some combat boots and you're ready to go! If you're a hiker or camper, these jackets will be your saving grace this fall.

Color, Color, Color!!!

Fall is often associated with browns and darker colors. Not this year! This fall is bright and vibrant. Deep blues, yellows, purples and oranges are great colors to make your fall fit pop while making the colder months warmer. If committing to a bold color for one outfit piece feels too intimidating, you can achieve the same effect with colorful accessories, makeup, socks or shoes. Colorful outfits can lift your spirits and keep you happy and productive as seasonal depression starts to creep in.

Military Jackets

For fall in Missoula, a jacket is a necessity, but a puffer every day isn't always right. Military jackets or a jacket in combat green are a great way to make a plain outfit look more intentional and fun. Jackets with fun buttons, embroidery or anything shiny will fit great this fall. A fun funky layer will always make your outfit so much better!

Patterns

Patterns are a great way to make an otherwise plain outfit more interesting. Plaid and colorful stripes are back, but not in the way fall normally brings them to us. Colorful plaid is a great add-on that makes your outfit look more intentional. A typical plaid shirt can do this, but so can plaid tights or belts. Colorful horizontal stripes are another great way to pull your outfit together for a fun autumn look. Though it might not seem like the usual color you would associate with the season, rainbow stripes paired with light-wash jeans will brighten you and your peers' fall this year.

BAB (big ass bag)

Trust me, I know a backpack is convenient for getting stuff from point A to point B, but it can ruin an outfit. A big shoulder bag is a great alternative to the backpack we've all been using for years. Dark brown or black bags pair well with any fall outfit and help you achieve a more mature look, while canvas or tougher materials will last longer and help you get into the mindset of a hard-working professional.



Zootown Challenge returns for fifth year

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There was no starter pistol at Washington-Grizzly Stadium on Sept. 26, but the 118 participants in the fifth annual Zootown Challenge flew out of the Topel Tunnel with the same urgency as if there was.

This year's Zootown Challenge boasted 25 unique obstacles in its most intense racing class. Racers in this tier climbed ropes, flipped tires, tossed sandbags and hiked the M Trail, all while completing a 10K race to the north endzone. Other race categories included a singles 5K, a team 5K, a 3K, a kids course and an all-abilities course for those with mental or physical disabilities.

"It's a good way to bond," Jim Barnes, 47, said. He was a member of the winning team, which led by over an hour.

Barnes joined his son, Brayden, 13, his friend Richie Brushia, 35, and Brushia's 13-year-old son Carter as "The Bruised Bananas."

VRTX Fitness, the gym that puts on the Zootown Challenge, donates all proceeds from the race to Opportunity Resources, a nonprofit dedicated to helping adults with disabilities find jobs and other opportunities. Trophies and medals for the course were made by artists at Opportunity Resources.

"People with mental or physical disabilities get through 18 (years old), and a lot of them don't know what to do after that," Derrek Nazelrod, 32, CEO and co-founder of VRTX Fitness, said. "Opportunity Resources helps them find that independence."

Nazelrod thinks fitness is an important factor in that independence. Nazelrod has had seven knee surgeries, but said that staying in shape allows him to remain pain-free.

Some racers shared the same sentiment. CrossFit athlete Kayla Couture, 39, said she stays motivated because she wants to "be able to move when [she is] 80."

Preparation for the event is rigorous, with fundraising and planning beginning only a month after the previous year's obstacle course is over. VRTX Fitness's team began setting up at 8 a.m. on Sept. 25 and stopped at 11 that night. They got back to work at 7 the next morning.

"We probably won't be out of here until eight, nine o'clock tonight, and then we're back here tomorrow to break down," Nazelrod said.

It's all worth it, though, Nazelrod said, to see the excitement of the people participating.

"I send off the start, and I get to watch everybody when they're exhausted coming through here," Nazelrod said. "And they're so happy, so it's really fun to watch."



ABOVE: Taylor Woods, 27, leaps from under the low crawl obstacle at Washington-Grizzly Stadium during the Zootown Challenge Sept. 26.

BOTTOM RIGHT: An all-abilities racer runs across the finish line.

BOTTOM LEFT: A participant in the Zootown Challenge descends the rope climb on Sept. 26.



A decade at the helm of Griz volleyball

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When Allison Lawrence took over the program in 2017, the University of Montana's volleyball team was coming off of a 5-21 season, its worst since 1977. Today, Griz volleyball has once again become a contender in the Big Sky Conference.

In her decade as the head coach at Montana, Lawrence has grown from an inexperienced coach to a leader who commands with confidence. Now her hard work is finally paying off. In the Big Sky volleyball preseason poll, UM received first-place votes for the first time since 2010. When the Griz faced off against Montana State University, a record-breaking crowd of over 3,000 filled Dahlberg Arena.

Lawrence was promoted from an assistant to head coach following the disastrous 2017 season. Kent Haslam, UM's athletic director, said he wanted to bring stability to the program, and knew she was a perfect fit.

"She's an amazing person, and I think when you look for leaders in a department, starting with really great people is not a bad place to start," Haslam said. "When I looked at Allison, I saw somebody who could lead young women, develop and train them, and have success."

Haslam said that in her 10 years, Lawrence has done a really good job, not only with the volleyball team, but the rest of the athletic department as well.

"What I really appreciate about her is that she's somebody who can look for a solution," he said. "Whether it's finding practice times or working out a gym conflict, or all these other things that are working under the surface that people don't see. As we try to function as a 15-sport athletic department, she's one that people look to as being a voice of reason."

When reflecting on her 10 years as head coach, Lawrence compared it to raising kids.

"It's one of those things where it feels both longer and shorter, you know?" Lawrence said. "So much has happened each individual year, but it feels like it has gone by in a snap."

Lawrence said that in those 10 years, she has grown a lot as a coach and a person.

"I'm just more comfortable in my own skin," she said. "My framework for decision-making, for leading, for collaborating feels like it has rounded out in a way where it is malleable, changeable, open to feedback, and it also feels more resilient. It feels like some pieces have been filled in over the years."

She added that she's proud of the connections she builds with players.

"I get to witness immense amounts of growth during a transition time in their life," she said. "I think that is an honor. I think it is something that bonds us together in a way that's like nothing I've ever experienced in any other part of my life."

Elle McCandless, 21, transferred from Seattle Pacific University, and Lawrence was one of the reasons why.

"She was really welcoming and also brought so much into the environment," McCandless said.

Alongside Lawrence's help on the court, McCandless said she's also great off the court.

"[She] treats you like a person too, which is kind of hard to see in volleyball and sports in general, but she treats everyone like a person outside of just volleyball," McCandless said.

On the court, it's been a tough season for UM, which is 4-9 overall and 0-2 in Big Sky play as of Sept. 30. Lawrence said she thinks conference play will be a real challenge for UM, but she's excited for it.

"The best part about our conference is just how narrow the difference is between the top of the conference and the bottom of the conference on any given weekend," she said. "Even though this is year 17 of doing this as a coach here and being in the Big Sky Conference, that never gets old, and that never feels easier."

Even though she's been at UM for so long, Lawrence knows her job isn't guaranteed.

"I have to pour everything into this because it can be temporary at any moment," Lawrence said. "That has kept me feeling grateful and excited and not worried about what the career arc looks like."

Lawrence said that for now, this is something she still loves doing.

"I want to keep doing this, and I trust that I will know when it's time to not do this anymore," she said. "But there is no end in sight right now."



University of Montana volleyball head coach Allison Lawrence poses in her office on Oct. 25, 2023. Lawrence was a star volleyball player at Oregon State University and became Montana's head volleyball coach in 2017.

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Gillman rewrites the record book

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In a record-breaking season, University of Montana running back Eli Gillman has proved his dedication and talent on the football field.

Gillman has achieved the most career rushing yards (over 4,000), total touchdowns (66) and rushing touchdowns (60) for the University.

Gillman knows the job is not finished. "Those [broken records] are goals I set for myself when I first got here. So it makes me feel like I was doing something right," Gillman said. "I felt proud, but not satisfied. Satisfaction will come when I'm done playing here."

According to Gillman, the records are just stops along the way in his five-year football journey.

"Things creep in, records creep in. As long as I keep doing well, take it one day at a time and continue to do my best for my team, then those records and cool accolades fall into place," Gillman said.

Bobby Kennedy, the head coach of UM's football team, knows that having a player like Gillman on the field helps the Grizzlies overpower their opponents and helps the players off the field.

"He's a generational player," Kennedy said in a press conference after the Grizzlies beat the University of California, Davis 62-22 on Sept. 26. "I mean, he's a guy that comes to work every day. His teammates love him. He has a lot of fun with our guys, but he's just a guy that just keeps chugging away."

For Gillman, it marks the time when it's time to start the grind.

"It's hard to wake up and lift at six or seven every morning," Gillman said. "It's hard to come to practice every day and just run around and get hit. It's not necessarily fun all the time."

This commitment and repetitive pain is accompanied by long and sometimes delicious cooldowns by the river.

"After practice, I love when I go on walks. It's a release," Gillman stated. "I like to go on any type of peaceful walks with friends or walk and get ice cream."

During the offseason, though, Gillman doesn't just focus on rushing touchdowns. He's more interested in racing on wheels and staying active.

"I love rollerblading and skating. [Bowling], I periodically do it, but I've been blading and skating since I was little," Gillman said. "I blade every single day. It's so fun."

In-season, you want to do your best not to get injured. But off-season, any sport goes, according to Gillman.



Griz running back Eli Gillman looks at the camera after scoring a touchdown against Southern Utah on Aug. 29.
JACKSON MAILEY | MONTANA KAIMIN

"I also love playing basketball and hockey off-season," Gillman said. "It's so easy to tweak your ankles, so I try to stay away from it."

Despite having a passion for all these athletics, Gillman's love for football solidified his place at UM. But year-round, Missoula is what sold Gillman.

Out of season, Gillman also makes time for his friends and daily habits. These include floating on the river and going up to Flathead Lake to hike.

Gillman has known hard hits and running his whole life, but life after football will be much tamer for Missoula's record-breaking running back.

After he graduates, he would love to sell high-end cars.

"I would work at a luxury car dealership and work my way up there," Gillman said. "If I could have \$10 million in my bank account, I'd want a luxury car studio and to own it. I don't know how much it is, but I'd buy it out, own and sell luxury cars."

Through lifelong hobbies and passions, Gillman knew he belonged alongside his brother, Monte Gillman, just as he always has.

Gillman has played with Monte his whole life, and is excited to don maroon and silver beside his brother.

While Gillman has made his mark through record-breaking, Monte has made his mark through his namesake.

"He was for sure. I get that from people a lot. 'Your brother's name is Monte, your brother is Monte?'" Gillman said. "And he's Monte, yes, but not the one you're thinking of."

As for Eli Gillman, he knew UM was the right place and choice for him. "100%. It's only felt like that more and more every year I've been here."

The University of Montana still has a handful of games left in the season. Griz fans are excited to see Gillman potentially beat the record of total touchdowns in Big Sky Conference history, which was set by two-time Super Bowl Champion Cooper Kupp while attending Eastern Washington University.

Kupp ended his collegiate football career with 77 touchdowns, while Gillman currently has 66.

SPORTS BRIEFS

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DESTRUCTION IN DAVIS

The University of Montana's football team routed the University of California, Davis on Saturday, 62-22.

Eli Gillman ran for a career-best 275 yards and four touchdowns, setting the single-game UM rushing record, the Big Sky Conference career rushing touchdowns record and moved to third on the Big Sky all-time scoring list with 396 career points.

"I'm so proud of him, but I'm also proud of those guys up front," UM head coach Bobby Kennedy told UM athletics post-game.

The 62 points were the most UM has scored against a top-25 opponent since 1996, and were the most points scored by any Big Sky team this season.

Montana remains in fourth place in the Football Championship Subdivision coaches' poll and will face the University of Northern Colorado in its homecoming game on Saturday.

CONFERENCE PLAY BEGINS

The University of Montana's soccer team begins its Big Sky Conference schedule Thursday with a visit to Southern Utah University.

The Griz have won the regular season title in the Big Sky for the past three seasons, but were picked to finish seventh in the 10-team league this year.

Montana went a disappointing 2-6 in its non-conference schedule, being outscored 19-5 in those games, and losing its final three games by multiple goals.

Luckily for UM, non-conference standings do not affect Big Sky standings, so it is essentially a new season for the Griz.

In recent history, most teams that win as many conference games as they lose have made the tournament, but with the addition of one more team to the Big Sky, it is difficult to know exactly what UM must do to qualify for the conference tournament.

BYE BYE BOBBY

The University of Illinois has parted ways with ex-Griz head coach Bobby Hauck after just four games.

"Coach Hauck and I agreed this is the best path forward for our staff, and most importantly, our student-athletes, at this time," Illinois head coach Bret Bielema said in a statement. "I would like to thank Bobby for his work with our program."

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