



**MONTANA KATIMIN'S**

# declassified

***The do's, don'ts  
and stories from  
spring breaks past.***

***Written by Kairi Lising  
Photographed by Weston Fudge  
Graphics by Barrett Clement***

***10 Pre-law success***

***12 Down the rabbit hole***

***14 Knocking them out***

**GUIDE TO**

**SPRING  
BREAK**

**March 12, 2026 | Volume 128 | Issue No. 21**





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."

## EDITORIAL STAFF

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
Elle Daniel

**BUSINESS MANAGER**  
Leah Goodwin

**ARTS & CULTURE EDITOR**  
Kairi Lising

**NEWS EDITOR**  
Jack Snow

**SPORTS EDITOR**  
Hannah Benitez

**FEATURES EDITOR**  
Sav Chavez

**AUDIO EDITOR**  
Grace Golbach

**COPY CHIEF**  
Mariah Henry

**DESIGN EDITOR**  
Dane Clements

**DIGITAL EDITOR**  
Caydence Martin

**PHOTO EDITOR**  
Henry Doellinger

**VIDEO EDITOR**  
Brooke Strickler

@Montanakaimin

@Montanakaimin  
@Montanakaiminsports

@Montanakaimin  
@Kaiminsports

## NEWSROOM STAFF

**NEWS REPORTERS**  
Sam Armstrong-Dubois  
Aidan Graham  
Jocelyn Hood  
Sydney Moate  
Colby Suko-Clark

**SPORTS REPORTERS**  
Dillon Richardson  
Abigail Stenkamp  
Tiaan Valdez

**ARTS & CULTURE REPORTERS**  
Niamh O'Farrell  
Sabrina Philip  
Bee Reiswig  
Blue Rogalski  
Izzy Slaughter

**PHOTOGRAPHERS**  
Weston Fudge  
Tori Kuehl  
Will Ladyman  
Jackson Mailey

**VIDEOGRAPHERS**  
Emily Fortune  
Sydney Hamilton

**COPY EDITORS**  
Julian Clemmer  
Sydney Hamilton  
Alyssa Murnion  
Madeline Thunberg

**FACT CHECKER**  
Maeve Kristian

**DESIGNERS**  
Fiona Davia  
Katie Mihalik  
Lily Peterson  
Diego Rey

**CARTOONIST**  
Barrett Clement

**SOCIAL MEDIA ASSISTANT**  
Logan Yantes

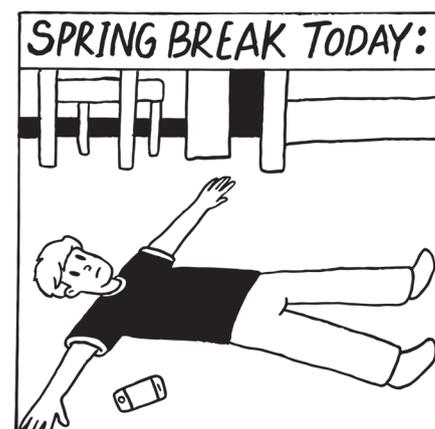
**BUSINESS ASSISTANTS**  
Alison Liwosz  
Joshua Stanek

**ADVISERS**  
Jason Begay  
Gabrielle Lurie

For comments, corrections or letters to the editor, contact  
[elle.daniel@umontana.edu](mailto:elle.daniel@umontana.edu)  
or call (406) 493-7166.

For advertising opportunities, contact  
[kaiminads@outlook.com](mailto:kaiminads@outlook.com)  
or go to  
<https://www.montanakaimin.com/site/advertise.html>

## KAIMIN KOMICS: SE 3 EP 12



BARRETT CLEMENT | CARTOONIST @FUNNYFERRETSTUDIOS

*BARRETT*

## CLASSIFIEDS

### Part-Time Home Cleaning - Small Homes & Apartments

Independent cleaner offering  
three-hour sessions at \$45/hour

Reliable, detail-oriented, and respectful of your space.  
Supplies provided. References available.

Email: [fullcircleclean@gmail.com](mailto:fullcircleclean@gmail.com)  
Diane

## POLITICAL CARTOON



# Dance without fear

Waking up at 8 a.m., smelling like vomit, in a hospital bed on New Year's Day wasn't my ideal start to 2026.

I love going out. I love getting ready in a cute outfit, meeting up with my friends and dancing until we close the bars down. But not every night is a good one — I found that out the hard way when my drink was spiked on New Year's Eve.

Spring break is a great time to get out there and live like a college kid. Missoula's nightlife is a blast and I know I'll be there too, but my perspective has changed. I realized just how important it is for us to look out for each other. If someone wasn't looking out for me that night, who knows what could've happened?

I started the night in high spirits. My friends ended up at Badlander, a club in downtown Missoula and my favorite place to dance in town. I took a shot at the bar and ordered a Midori sour. My friend called me to the dancefloor, which took me and my drink through the crowd.

I thought if I always had a hand on my drink, I'd be OK. Everyone knows the rule to never leave your drink unattended, but in the short time the drink was in my hand on the dance floor, someone had slipped something into it. The last thing I remember is suddenly feeling dizzy. The next moment, I was in the hospital.

My friends filled in the blanks for me later. According to them, my demeanor changed. I became unresponsive. Then I started vomiting and didn't stop until the bar closed at 2 a.m. My friend was able to get me up on my feet, but I fell over like a log. When the club found out, they called an ambulance.

According to GoodRx, symptoms can include difficulty speaking, feeling more intoxicated than you should be, dizziness, nausea and slower breathing than usual.

In the days after, I felt different. Not only was I saddled with a \$750 hospital bill, but I didn't feel normal. I had intense brain fog. If I couldn't see something it didn't exist.

It felt like I was going through every day like a third-person video game where you can control the player-character from above. It was terrifying, I didn't feel like myself. To this day, my memory is different. I forget things I was just talking about and where I've put things all the time.

This experience was harrowing. It was terrifying just how quick it happened. But more than anything, I'm so grateful the people around me knew the signs. When you're out and about painting the town red this week, keep these signs in your back pocket.

According to the Better Days Treatment Center, if you suspect you've been roofied, ask for help. Stay with a trusted friend and call 911.

"Roofie attacks often occur in social settings, so maintaining a buddy system and being vigilant can help prevent dangerous situations," wrote the Western Montana LGBTQ+ Community Center, an advocacy resource center for LGBTQ+ Montanans.

This shouldn't stop you from wanting to go out. Everyone should get to have fun without fear, but not without vigilance. Watch your drink, keep your friends close, ask for help and dance the night away — safely.

- *Kairi Lising, arts editor*  
**Like it? Hate it? Let us know.**  
 Email us your opinions at  
 elle.daniel@umontana.edu

## SUDOKU

Edited by Margie E. Burke

Difficulty: Medium

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

**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:

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

Copyright 2026 by The Puzzle Syndicate

## Shred the gnar



Chase Etter, 16, founder of Cutthroat Surf, a surfboard company based in Missoula, surfs Brennan's Wave on March 5. **WESTON FUDGE | MONTANA KAIMIN**

# In local news...

JACK SNOW | NEWS EDITOR  
jack.snow@umontana.edu

## RYAN ZINKE AND STEVE DAINES WITHDRAW FROM ELECTIONS

Rep. Ryan Zinke announced on March 2 that he is not running for reelection in Montana's western congressional district.

The Republican has represented the district since 2023, according to KXLH.

In a letter, Zinke explained that he has undergone multiple surgeries during his time as a congressman to address previous military injuries. He clarified that his upcoming procedures will require a long period of recovery.

"It has been a great privilege to serve Montana and our great Nation as the first U.S. Navy SEAL to serve in the State Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, and the first Montanan to serve as a Cabinet Secretary," he wrote.

Zinke is originally from Bozeman, and was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives four times between 2014 and 2024. His former seat will now be sought by Republican candidates Aaron Flint and Al Olszewski.

Flint is a conservative talk show host who currently works for "Montana Talks." He posted a video to social media announcing his candidacy and describing himself as an "America First Patriot."

Olszewski is a former state senator and orthopedic surgeon who lost a close race to Zinke in 2022. He filed with the Secretary of State's office in the afternoon of March 2.

Additionally, Sen. Steve Daines dropped out of the 2026 senate race just two minutes before the filing deadline closed last Wednesday.

The Montana senator joins Ryan Zinke as the second incumbent Republican from the state to withdraw from this year's elections, according to Montana Free Press.

Daines had previously filed for reelection four weeks prior on Feb. 17 and raised \$4.9 million for his budding campaign.

"I'm thankful to have served alongside President Trump and my colleagues in the Senate," Daines said in an announcement.

The fresh vacancy has made room for Daines' chosen successor, Montana U.S. Attorney Kurt Alme.

Alme has never held statewide office, but announced his candidacy in a press release that included endorsements from Daines, President Donald Trump, Sen. Tim Sheehy and Gov. Greg Gianforte.

The race has also drawn two other Republican candidates in Lee Calhoun of Whitefish, and Charles Walking Child of Helena. Like Alme, neither has previously held statewide office.

## MISSOULA PREPARES FOR EARLY FIRE SEASON

Missoula County and its partners began conducting controlled burns early this year, following a mild winter.

Adriane Beck, director of Disaster and Emergency Services at Missoula County, told the Missoula Current that low moisture is giving an early start to the fire season.

"This week is one of the best opportunities with some precipitation in the forecast," Beck said. She went on to say that workers are taking advantage of the weather to conduct burns on Marshall Mountain.

Missoula gained a Community Wildfire Defense Grant last year, which will provide up to \$1.1 million in the next five years.

Beck said that the funding helps with outreach and education. In 2025 it helped with conducting 40 preparedness visits which were attended by 700 people.

"This time of the year is where they really try to capture people's awareness," Beck said. "With the dry winter and spring burning, it has really picked up in 2026. We hope to see that number increase."



## This week on the Kaimin Cast ...

Tyler Yaney became an Uber driver after he moved to Missoula and found himself between jobs. His 10-year-old dog, Shannon, rode along with him until she passed away. Uber has now been his full time job for nine years, and his new four-legged companion is a seven-year-old golden retriever-Australian shepherd mix, Timber.

Last April, Yaney started creating content of Timber's Uber rides for social media. The account, @timbersgottaroll, now has 91,000 followers on TikTok and over 57,000 followers on Instagram. Timber has become well known around Missoula through his backseat hangouts with locals, and across the nation through his social media content and references to the jam band Phish.

"People get real excited. Some people are a little confused, 'Is this my actual Uber?' Which I have to reassure them like 'Yes, I'm your Uber. I'm picking you up like I have a dog with me.' It's pretty cool," Yaney said.

Hear more about Missoula's four-legged influencer by checking out this week's podcast, "Need a ride? Timber provides" by heading to our website at montanakaimin.com.

- Grace Golbach,  
audio editor



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



## FORMER IRANIAN SUPREME LEADER'S SON NAMED AS REGIME SUCCESSOR

Mojtaba Khamenei, the son of previous Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, has taken on the position of his late father after the latter was killed by a U.S.-Israeli airstrike.

Mojtaba was appointed by Iran's 88-member Assembly of Experts, according to CNN.

President Donald Trump had previously labeled him as an "unacceptable" leader for Iran, so Mojtaba's appointment looks to be a signal that the country doesn't intend to yield to American influence.

Former U.S. Ambassador to Oman, Gary Grappo, said that most of Mojtaba's experience comes from managing his fathers office.

"You could consider it to be akin to the chief of staff with his hands on intelligence, economic policy, security policy and, of course, all the political affairs as well as religious affairs," he said.

"God's grace became manifest," Mojtaba supporters chanted in Tehran the morning after his selection. "Khamenei became young again."

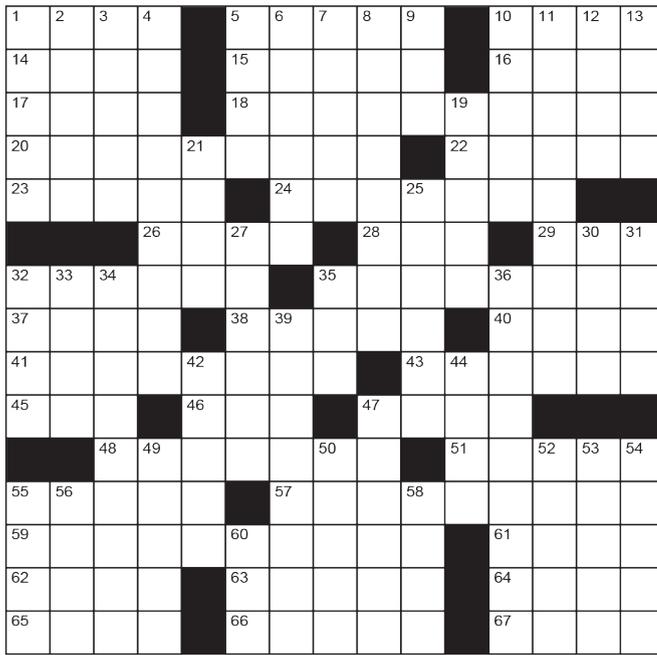
## EXPLOSIVE DEVICE THROWN IN NEW YORK PROTEST

An improvised explosive device was thrown by a counter protestor at an anti-Islam demonstration in New York City on Saturday.

The explosive device contained nuts, bolts, screws and a fuse, but extinguished itself after being thrown. Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch clarified in a social media post that the device was not a fake and "could have caused serious injury or death."

Two people were taken into police custody after they were alleged to have been involved in the confrontation, which took place during a "Stop the Islamic Takeover of New York City" protest on Saturday. The event was organized by the far right activist Jake Lang outside the Manhattan home of Mayor Zohran Mamdani, according to AP News.

"Violence at a protest is never acceptable," Mamdani said in a statement Sunday. "The attempt to use an explosive device and hurt others is not only criminal, it is reprehensible and the antithesis of who we are."



Copyright 2026 by The Puzzle Syndicate

ACROSS

- 1 Highlands miss
- 5 Mosey along
- 10 Take for a ride
- 14 Bart's teacher
- 15 Asia's \_\_\_ Peninsula
- 16 Kind of wolf
- 17 Middy hour
- 18 Not up to snuff
- 20 Desert mount
- 22 Like a new candle
- 23 Part of a flower
- 24 Text, for instance
- 26 Indian royal
- 28 Aniston rom-com, "Rumor \_\_\_ It..."
- 29 Luxurious resort
- 32 Bahamas island group
- 35 Bedtime drink
- 37 Comparable (to)
- 38 Figure of speech
- 40 Painter Magritte
- 41 Infatuated
- 43 Like old-time gasoline
- 45 Thanksgiving side
- 46 Aquatic shocker
- 47 Twosome
- 48 Mediocre
- 51 Anatomical cul-de-sac
- 55 Red Square figure
- 57 Posh city dwelling
- 59 Indiana city on the Ohio
- 61 Fingerboard ridge
- 62 DeSoto's "Emergency!" partner
- 63 Hubby's mom, for one
- 64 80s flick, "St. Elmo's \_\_\_"
- 65 Small bills
- 66 Pharaoh's land
- 67 Bratty talk
- 25 In a wise way
- 27 Act nervous
- 30 Glazier's item
- 31 Made like
- 32 Pampered one?
- 33 Swedish furniture giant
- 34 Run poorly
- 35 Doze (off)
- 36 Compromises
- 39 Telling, as a story
- 42 Low double digits
- 44 Apiece
- 47 Turkey's wattle
- 49 Swings for Tarzan
- 50 "Holy smokes!"
- 52 Vatican tribunal
- 53 \_\_\_ manual
- 54 Distributes, with "out"
- 55 Toy with theme parks
- 56 Peters who played Dahmer
- 58 Pond denizen
- 60 Fight (for)

DOWN

- 1 Gives for a bit
- 2 Really love
- 3 Rapping Dogg
- 4 Country within Italy
- 5 Encircled by
- 6 Bahrain's capital
- 7 Play loudly
- 8 Nobility title
- 9 Storm center
- 10 Hurled through the air
- 11 Joined
- 12 Virus prefix
- 13 It often has dashes
- 19 Put down
- 21 Get-up-and-go

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

# Break-o-scope

IZZY SLAUGHTER | ARTS & CULTURE REPORTER

izzy.slaughter@umontana.edu

The week of spring break, it's finally here! It's time to explore the limits of a new place, or maybe discover something brand new right here at home. Whether it be a new country or a different hike in Missoula, it's going to be all about you and your time to relax. Let's see what this break will bring to you!

**PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20):** Pisces, you love to analyze every situation, you should lean into that! This spring break, if you find yourself up in the mountains, make sure you have packed a journal or a sketch book, and tell that thing all about your experience. Those memories will be so entertaining to look back on.

**ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19):** Boy, you already know what spring break is about! WERK that Aries magic and go do what you do best. You might travel across the states. You could end up on a sailboat, perchance. Wherever you find yourself, you will live the hell out of that moment.

**TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20):** Taurus, you are talented at winding yourself into a strict routine for daily life. For break, it is crucial that you let go of that and let loose. This break has the potential to develop that lovely character of yours even more if you let it do its thang.

**GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20):** Oh Gemini, you have so much to offer, and I'm pretty sure you have already taken advantage of travel this semester. For a spring break, more reconnecting and reflection will do you right. Get out there again as you do best and explore! It might benefit you to focus on loved ones this break.

**CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22):** Cancer, you little stinker. You just want to have a jolly good time this break. Something to pay attention to is the people you meet along the way, they will bring future themes to your life. Take your jolly soul somewhere truly calming. It'll do you right.

**LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22):** Leo, you have been studious as hell this semester, and you are so full of energy. Put all that enthusiasm into a treacherous hike that will wear you out and leave you some time for a breather! You deserve it!

**VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 22):** Virgo, girl, it's time to let go. I mean it, dude! You can be so high strung and on top of it, which are such great qualities, but holy smokes is it time for a break. You've been working hard, and the most difficult thing for you may be letting yourself have some time, guilt-free.



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

**LIBRA (SEP. 23-OCT. 22):** Libra, always so selfless, even when it comes to a week off of the school grind. You may find yourself wrapped up in someone else's spring break plans and dragged along on a 13-mile hike when you don't even like hiking. Because of your open mind and kindness you may find yourself intrigued by a new hobby! Hooray, you've gotten the relaxation you need and a shiny new experience for your scrapbook.

**SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21):** Scorpio, you are always looking for something more meaningful than meets the eye. Spring break plans, whatever they may be, will bring you closer to your roots and your most wanted experiences. You may travel far or stay close, but whatever you choose, there will be a great deal to learn.

**SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21):** Oh Sagittarius! You love a good push of your own strength. This spring break you will most likely explore as much as possible, which could mean some serious bushwacking in the wilderness. You may find something unexpected, analyze this new thing and hone in on what it could mean about the rest of your semester!

**CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19):** Disciplined Capricorn, you have gotten out on many excursions this far in the semester. It's time for something different, possibly more chill than you are used to. Push yourself to focus on your wellbeing this break, and find something rebuilding for your soul.

**AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18):** Aquarius, I don't quite know where to start with you. You are unpredictable at times. This is a strong quality, and your gut instincts will take you far for this time off your studies. Don't feel the pressure to travel elsewhere, and don't feel pressure to stay. Whatever you decide, find a good view for the sunset.

# Indian Consul General visits UM

SYDNEY MOATE | NEWS REPORTER

sydney.moate@umontana.edu

Gov. Greg Gianforte and Consul General of the Indian Consulate in Seattle, Prakash Gupta, unveiled a bust of Mahatma Gandhi at the Mansfield Center on March 3.

The Indian government donates busts of Gandhi to states and institutions around the world, primarily to promote Gandhi's message of peace and non-violence.

Gianforte chose the Mansfield Center to house the statue because of its namesake, Mike Mansfield, who traveled to India to meet with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on behalf of President Kennedy.

Along with Gianforte and Gupta, the unveiling event at the center was attended by Executive Director of the Mansfield Center Deena Mansour, Commissioner of Higher Education Clayton Christian, Provost Adrea Lawrence and representatives from Sens. Steve Daines and Tim Sheehy's offices, among many others.

First, Mansour gave a speech about the legacy of Mike Mansfield, followed by a video message from Sen. Daines. Then Gianforte and Gupta unveiled the bust and spread rose petals on it.

Gupta said there is a tradition in India to honor dignitaries. With the elderly, they touch their feet, and with statues, they spread rose petals. That tradition was brought to Montana when Gupta and Gianforte spread rose petals on the bust of Gandhi.

Gupta gave his remarks, saying Montana feels like a second home to him and is a vibrant and dynamic state. He praised Gianforte as a great leader, who then gave a speech accepting the bust and thanking Gupta and the government of India.

Mansour finished by thanking Facilities Services for building the base and plaque for the bust. The plaque reads, "All good thoughts and ideas mean nothing without action," a quote from Gandhi.

According to Mansour, later in the day, Gupta met with University of Montana academic leadership, Mayor of Missoula Andrea Davis and UM students who asked questions about India, diplomacy and regional issues.

In the evening, the Consul General hosted an Indian community dinner and film screening of the Indian movie, "Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara." The event also featured a symbolic celebration of Holi, the Hindu Festival of Colors, which celebrates spring.

The rewards of the partnership between India and Montana go beyond Tuesday's events, however.

"The India-Montana relationship includes potential for investment and trade in such areas as food security, critical minerals, semiconductors, batteries, clean energy, biotech and photonics," Mansour said.

According to Mansour, Sen. Daines first visited India in an official capacity in November 2021 and has since significantly

increased his focus on building a stronger U.S.-India relationship. At the June 2025 U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum in Washington, D.C., Sen. Daines spoke to India's growing global importance and his strong confidence in India's long-term economic and strategic prospects.

"As a result, we hope to develop externally funded opportunities for student exchange, coursework and speaker opportunities, so that UM students can benefit from these potential economic opportunities," Mansour said.

Mansour said the Mansfield Center is an ideal location for this bust because of its history with India. Six Democratic and Republican presidents in Washington valued Mansfield's Asia expertise. Mansfield first traveled to India in 1944,

then returned in 1962. The Mansfield Center draws on this legacy to support UM and the state in understanding the Indo-Pacific region, Mansour said.

This is Gupta's sixth visit to Montana and second visit to UM. "I was impressed by the knowledge I came across in the students, their curiosity about India and their willingness to learn," he said. "Our engagement with UM has been very fruitful."

He said that he feels the speech went well and that it is an honor to have Gandhi's presence grace the University of Montana campus and the Mansfield Center. Gupta expects many more visits to Montana and spoke to Gianforte on this trip about hosting Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, at the Governor's mansion.



Montana Gov. Greg Gianforte and Indian Consul General Prakash Gupta pose with the newly gifted Gandhi bust at the Mansfield library on March 3.

JACKSON MAILEY | MONTANA KAIMIN

# How horse therapy could help stroke survivors

JOCELYN HOOD | NEWS REPORTER

jocelyn.hood@umontana.edu

A study of the effects of hippotherapy, a kind of therapy using the movement of horses, on adults who've had strokes is currently recruiting participants and will run for the next two years with the University of Montana.

The study is led by Julia Mazzarella, an assistant professor in the School of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science and the director of the Pediatric Rehabilitation and Active Lifestyles Lab. According to her, the study is a randomized trial with participants either in an equine setting or in a nature-based comparison without horses.

"I'm excited for the study and to dip my toes into working with adults a little more on the research side," Mazzarella said.

Participants will get four weeks of treatment and a total of 12 hours of therapy over eight 90-minute sessions.

"We'll do some different assessments of [participants'] motor skills, so things like balance, gait speed and dual tasking, so being able to talk and walk," Mazzarella said. "And then they'll do different speech outcome measures and some cognitive ones as well."

The study will focus solely on stroke survivors with aphasia, a communication and language disorder that can be caused by strokes.

Cathy Off, the chair of the School of Speech, Language, Hearing and Occupational Sciences and the co-director of the Big Sky Aphasia Program, is involved in the study.

"[For] most people with aphasia, their intelligence is intact, their cognition is intact, they can problem solve and reason just fine, but they're not able to translate what they're thinking into what's coming out of their mouth," Off said. "So, it feels a little bit like knowing a tiny bit of a second language but not being competent at it."

The study received its funding of \$150,000 thanks to a pilot study run by Bethany Wenger, a 45-year-old graduate student from Arlington, Texas, who is pursuing a master's degree in speech language pathology. Wenger said the pilot study's main purpose was to make sure that the current study was possible to accomplish.

Among the handful of participants in this study was Sasha Westphal, a 27-year-old stroke survivor with aphasia who lives in Kenosha, Wisconsin. She said hippotherapy was "the most fun therapy [she's] ever had" and put her "in a good mood every time."

"I was giggling a lot," Westphal said, "especially when I learned how to trot because it's really bumpy."

Organizing her thoughts and working on her upper body strength were two of Westphal's goals in hippotherapy, which she said improved through brushing the horse while doing speech exercises, riding the horse forward, backward and sideways as well as doing obstacles with the horse.

"It was a slow process, but overall, I think I improved tremendously," Westphal said. "I see [my improvements] when I tell stories."

Wenger is going to be the speech language pathologist for both the nature-based and horse-based versions of the study. She said that the enjoyment that participants like Westphal get from being active is her favorite part of the job.

"I think the most fun part for me is how excited people are to be there. You know, it's something that they are actively seeking. They want to go out and they want to do something different, and their enthusiasm for it and their energy is so contagious that we're all just all smiles the whole time we're there," Wenger said.

Mazzarella said they'll also be monitoring the effects of the therapy on the horses, like body language and hormone levels in their saliva of oxytocin and cortisol.

Oxytocin, she said, is known as the "love hormone" and would indicate a positive interaction for the horses, while cortisol is the "stress hormone" and would indicate a negative interaction.

The study will look at how horses react to the therapy and how they build relationships with participants, according to Mazzarella.

She said that based on the pilot study, she anticipates improvement in motor skills, speech and cognitive abilities in participants, like gait speed and balance.

Mazzarella also said she expects that the horses will have a positive experience with the interaction because her previous research with kids doing hippotherapy showed oxytocin levels increased in the horses. She said horses' cortisol levels and heart rate variabilities will likely not significantly change during hippotherapy.

However, Mazzarella's experience is with children who weigh less than adults, and she said that added weight on the horses may impact the results.

Participants have to be under 175 pounds to keep the horses and those who assist participants safe. They also have to be able to walk short distances with or without an assistive device like a cane or walker, and their stroke should have occurred more than three months before treatment.



Sasha Westphal pets Jewel, a horse at Trotting Horse Therapeutic Riding, during part of Bethany Wenger's pilot study on June 27, 2025. CONTRIBUTED | BETHANY WAGNER

Hippotherapy is different from clinical therapies because of how active it is. Off said this is one of its benefits.

"[Recovery] doesn't happen overnight, and so people get kind of therapized over therapies," Off said in reference to people tiring of clinical therapy. "They go to their one-on-one speech therapy, or their one-on-one [physical therapy] over and over again. And neuroplasticity likes change."

Westphal appreciates more hands-on therapies for her recovery. Other than hippotherapy, she has also tried therapy

involving swimming and biking.

"I definitely like to be active and doing things while talking," Westphal said.

This study of hippotherapy's effect on adults who've had strokes and have aphasia has never been done before, according to Off, and that's part of why she's excited to work on it.

"I mean, the really cool part about this is that nobody's doing it," Off said. "And so, for stroke survivors, this is hopefully providing the initial evidence that it works."

# MONTANA KAIMIN'S DECLASSIFIED GUIDE TO SPRING BREAK



**The do's, don'ts  
and stories from  
spring breaks past.**

**Written by Kairi Lising  
Photographed by Weston Fudge  
Graphics by Barrett Clement**

It's time to relax and recharge after the pain and torment of midterms. This break is well deserved. Some might be staying in Missoula, while others are heading to the airport to catch a flight to a hot new destination.

No matter the plans, everyone wants to get the most out of their spring break. To make sure University of Montana students stay safe, have fun and don't forget the little details when hitting the road or staying home, here's tips, Spring break stories and a collection of what's happening around town the week of spring break.

## ROADTRIP ESSENTIALS



Instead of staying here, you've packed up your car for the roadtrip of a lifetime. Just you, your friends and the open road. You've packed all the obvious essentials: food, water, emergency supplies, etc. But wait! Don't forget to check these items off your list.

- ❑ **A towel.** You'll never know what messy situation you could get yourself in on the road and a towel could save the day.
- ❑ **Chapstick with sunblock.** Nobody wants dry-ass, crusty-ass lips, let alone sunburnt ones.
- ❑ **Roadtrip games.** Listening to music gets old sometimes, so bring something to keep your caravan's mind busy. Mad Libs, "Choose Your Own Adventure" are always classic. You could even bring "Heated Rivalry" and do a dramatic reading in the passenger's seat.
- ❑ **Plastic bags.** Sometimes long car rides inevitably end with a sour stomach. Always bring something to yak into to avoid the clean up.
- ❑ **Tiger Balm.** When you're having back pain from driving long hours, slap this on and you'll be better in no time. Also, it's a natural mosquito repellent.

## Break in the backseat

The only light in the back of the van came from the front windows. University of Montana alum Dylan Cherullo's throne of boxes wasn't much help against the bumpy cobbled streets of southern France. The boxes were full of French souvenir magnets sold by the couple he was staying with. The radio was blasting loud Polish music.

Cherullo spent the spring break of 2023 in the back of the windowless van by his own choice, of course. In his third year at UM, he jet-setted to the south of France where he stayed in a cheap Airbnb owned by a Polish couple who sold knickknacks. The couple was nice to Cherullo, albeit hard to communicate with as they only spoke French and a bit of English.

"Once I showed up, they offered me food and were really glad to see a younger person. Apparently, the apartment [I was staying in] was normally used by older folks," Cherullo said.

He connected with the husband of the couple the most, who he described as "huge," and a former basketball player. Cherullo and the husband had the classic "Lebron v.s. Jordan" debate and he showed him some of the highlights from his kid's games.

The Airbnb itself was a small apartment in a building from the late 1990s. The couple kept it clean and colorfully decorated with a lot of French motifs. Cherullo said the elevator up was so small that he and the husband stood side by side as they made their way up to his lodgings.

"The views were great though, overlooking the village's soccer field so you could see evening games and practices," Cherullo said.

The couple offered him a free ride to Monaco, which he couldn't say no to. What he didn't expect was the arrangement. They put him in the back of their van, on a pile of cardboard boxes. Despite the less-than-comfortable travel conditions, Cherullo wouldn't change a thing.

"Did it every day the rest of my time there, it was great," Cherullo said.

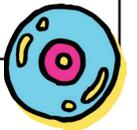
Cherullo's advice: For anyone jetsetting abroad for spring break, give yourself some buffer time for getting back so you can have at least a prayer of getting a full night's sleep before class on Monday.



## DJ Kris Moon's Spring break essentials mix

The Kaimin asked Kris Moon, a resident DJ at Missoula's dance club, the Badlander, what was on his spring break playlist. From his playlist to your aux cord, here's a mix certified to keep you dancing all night long!

- "DTMF" by Bad Bunny
- "Beto's Horns" by Fred Again
- "Set the Roof" by Hudson Mohawke & Nikki Nair
- "Club Classics" (Kazi Edit) by Charli XCX
- "Sticky" (XNYWOLF Edit) by Tyler the Creator
- "Cook" by Sofi Tukker & J Balvin
- "Dance" by Slayyyter
- "Folded" by Kehlani
- "Man I Need" (99 Hertz Remix) by Olivia Dean
- "Drop" by Zeddy Will



## Spring Break Safety Tips

Above everything, it's important to stay safe. The intersection of St. Patrick's Day and spring break, both holidays known for partying, could be the perfect storm for unsafe situations. Here are some tips according to the Curry Health Center to keep you and your crew safe:

Alcohol poisoning is a medical emergency. Remember PUBS. Call for help if someone is:

1. Puking while passed out
2. Unresponsive to pinching or shaking
3. Breathing is noisy, slow, shallow or has stopped
4. Skin is blue, cold or clammy. If a person has darker skin, check for pale lips or nail beds.

If you see even one PUBS sign, call 911 immediately.

Most UM students already look out for one another — that's part of our campus culture. Drink spiking can happen to anyone and is never the victim's fault.

1. Keep an eye on their drink
2. Accept drinks only from trusted sources
3. Go out with friends and check in often
4. Leave situations that don't feel right

If something feels off, trust yourself and seek support.

## Make a stay at home break a moment!



Left to right, Elle Busch, Abby Faulhaber and Dylan McKay discuss their answers to trivia questions at Western Cider in Missoula on March 5.

While many have left town on a flight to a spring break getaway, you're stuck here at home in dear old Zootown. Fret not, there's more than enough going on in town this break to keep you booked and busy.

### St. Patty's Day

Sure, we might not measure up to Butte when it comes to St. Patrick's Day festivities, but this March 17, there's still a lot of fun things to do around town! From a parade to bingo and Irish dancing, Zootown has you covered.

- St. Patrick's Day Parade in Downtown Missoula, at noon on March 17.
- St. Patrick's Day Party at Cranky Sam's Public House, at 4:30 p.m. March 17.
  - 4:30 p.m., Irish Dancers and bagpipes.
  - 6 p.m., The annual mashed potato eating contest.
  - 7:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m., bingo
  - Irish food and drinks will be served all day!

**Hot tip:** Don't forget your green!

### Bingo

One thing about Missoulians, they love some bingo. A variety of bingo events are happening spring break week. Get in there and sweep the victory!

- NFL bingo at Tamarack Brewing Company, 5 p.m. March 16. Prizes include free beer and 50% off their meal.
- Bingo Night at the Thomas Meagher Bar, at 8 p.m. March 18.
- Bingo at the Missoula Senior Center, at 4:30 p.m. March 19. Get in there to win prizes like free beer and door prizes!

**Hot tip:** Always arrive at least 15-30 minutes early. Seats fill up quickly.

### Trivia

If putting your thinking cap on is more your style, there are more than enough opportunities during spring break to stretch that brain muscle. Come with friends or alone, either way you better have a cool team name.

- Tuesday Night Trivia at The Trough, at 5:30 p.m. March 17
- St. Patrick's Day Trivia at the Old Post, at 7 p.m. March 17.
- Trivia Night at the Union Club, at 8 p.m. March 17.
- Trivia Night at Cranky Sam's Public House, at 7 p.m. March 18. Prizes include gift cards and other handpicked items.
- Wednesday Night Trivia at Draught Works Brewery, at 7 p.m. March 18. Prizes include Draught Works gift cards, tickets to LogJam Presents concerts or passes to see your favorite flicks at The Roxy Theater.

**Hot tip:** You better not have your phone out with Google open. Cheating is for losers and you wouldn't want to be a loser, right?

### Karaoke

Classic, dependable, fun, what more could you ask for? Karaoke is always better with friends so get a big group or go by yourself and be the star of your own show! Not to mention, admission is free for all events!

- Karaoke Monday (21+) at The Union, at 9 p.m. March 16.
- Kettlehouse Karaoke at the Badlander, at 9 p.m. March 18.
- Pro DJ Karaoke at the Sunrise Saloon, at 8 p.m. March 19.
- Karaoke Night at the Jack Saloon, at 7 p.m. March 20.

**Hot tip:** Always tip your karaoke host, it takes a lot of work to listen to pitchy voices for hours. Also, warm up your voice! Do some lip buzzes to make sure you don't end the night on vocal rest.

## quiz:

### How does your spring break end?

**1. Your roadtrip car breaks down at a Town Pump. What drink/snack combo are you grabbing to survive the wait for a tow?**

**A.** Yerba Mate and a One Protein Bar: we get it, you're trying to be "healthy." Don't blame me if you spend a majority of the wait blowing up the bathroom.

**B.** Sugar-free Red Bull and Nerds Gummy Clusters: you always understand the assignment. Your tried and true gas station combo never fails you.

**C.** Monster Energy and a pack of Marlboro Golds: you're here for a good time, not a long time. Passing the time on the side of the road never felt so good with heart palpitations and lung cancer.

**2. You and your friends go on a hike, but quickly go off trail. How are you saving the day?**

**A.** You retrace your steps, guiding your group back to the main trail in enough time to see the sunset at the summit.

**B.** You tell your group to stay put. Someone will discover you guys eventually. Good thing you packed your penjamin.

**C.** You start yelling "Help!" Eventually a handsome stranger hears your calls and pulls your group from the thicket. Call that a chance encounter.

**3. You're drafting up your airport layover playlist. What's your repeat track while you're waiting for your flight?**

**A.** "NUEVAYoL" by Bad Bunny

**B.** "Stateside" by PinkPantheress and Zara Larson

**C.** "back to friends" by sombr

**4. Your friends invite you out on a night on the town! What kind of outfit will keep you feeling good through the St. Patty's Day bar crawl?**

**A.** Something cute and comfy. 100% linen, of course. No pit stains on the dance floor!

**B.** Everything cropped and mini. The more skin showing, the better. Who cares if it's 20 degrees out there? In here, you're always turning up the heat.

**C.** Casual, t-shirt and jeans. No need to dress up in a Montana bar, you always love to come as you are.



**5. Before you delete all your apps for a much-needed social media spring break detox, you post one last Instagram note. What is your status update?**

- A.** Deleting insta! Txt me if you need me
- B.** Bye forever lol
- C.** See you later ;)

**6. You've stopped at a national park's gift shop for a souvenir. What overpriced tchotchke are you taking home with you?**

**A.** A park-themed tote bag. You can't wait to walk across campus carrying it over your shoulder with a latte in your hands.

**B.** A bottle opener keychain with your name on it. Cute, practical and personalized? It's practically begging to be bought.

**C.** A pressed penny. Nothing like pushing the crank and seeing your football-shaped prize fall into your hands #RIPPenny

**7. What's your favorite spring break movie?**

**A.** "22 Jump Street" (2014)

**B.** "Spring Breakers" (2012)

**C.** "Little Miss Sunshine" (2006)



**8. You finally pulled up your bootstraps and asked your crush out, but that also means you pick the date. What are you doing with your hot date?**

**A.** You watch a movie together. In your PJs with all your favorite snacks, you cozy up for the night.

**B.** Going dancing! You get the Saturday night fever with your date, boogieing the night away.

**C.** Long walk downtown. You talk and laugh under the stars. Maybe share a kiss?

## If you've answered...

### Mostly As

Your spring break ended in the same way it always has. You had a relatively uneventful break with work and catching up with assignments, there wasn't much to do except to do everything you were supposed to. Nothing wrong with that! Maybe next time you'll live a little?

### Mostly Bs

Bitch, you owned this break. It ended in maybe the worst hangover of your life and a tattoo you can't explain but you lived it to the fullest. Was it reckless? Yes. Was it fun? Absolutely. Don't forget though, the fairytale bender is over when school starts on Monday.

### Mostly Cs

All the break shenanigans ended in something truly special. You fell for someone! Lucky enough, they fell for you too. You finally got the spring break romance everyone else wanted. And they lived happily ever after.

# Pre-Law program records 100% law school acceptance

COLBY SUKO-CLARK | NEWS REPORTER

colby.sukoclarck@umontana.edu

For the second year in a row, the University of Montana pre-law program has had all its students accepted into law schools.

Soazig Le Bihan, the creator and current director of the pre-law program at UM, helped start the program in 2013.

"I was hired in 2008, and in 2009 I was changed to be pre-law adviser," Le Bihan said. At the time, there was no set pre-law program. There were advisers who would work around students to prepare them a little bit for law school, but no set major for students to join. Le Bihan wanted there to be something more than just the advisers and classes.

"In 2012, I met with the provost, he said 'yes,' and we started building in 2013, with a seminar and classes," Le Bihan said. This would be the start of an official pre-law program at UM. The pre-law program saw success from the start.

"I've had 90% acceptance since 2013, that's over 20 points above the national average," Le Bihan said. According to the American Bar Association, the average acceptance rating was 69.9% in 2025, which places UM a lot higher than the average acceptance rate. The 10% that didn't pass usually retook the Law School Admission Test and applied again. "Most students made it a second time," Le Bihan said.

In 2024, the program reached a 100% acceptance rate for students who applied to get into law school. That means that every student who applied to law school from the pre-law program was accepted. This rate sparked interest from students.

"I was thinking of attending Montana State for [its] pre-law program, but after the success of UM's program, I will be attending [there] for college," said Tracy Richardson, a senior in high school, who will major in political science at UM. The pre-law program cannot be listed as a primary major, only as a secondary.

"I wish I could just major in pre-law, I know that I want to go to law school, so I want to just take pre-law," Richardson said. However, Le Bihan believes that students need to branch out into other fields to broaden their lives.

"I am into philosophy, so I want students to find meaning," Le Bihan said. This meaning also comes in the form of helping students find the right type of law. "It's a puzzle for me. What news stories make you upset? When do you get angry? What keeps you up at night?" Le Bihan said. These questions are used to help students find the issues that they want to help solve.



Soazig Le Bihan is the pre-law program director. "Some kids are going weeks without eating on campus, so us accepting any and everyone is the least we can do," Le Bihan said in Eck Hall on March 9. **WILL LADYMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN**

"We have music majors and political science majors," she said. The program attracts a diverse array of students because of its unique approach.

"Any student who wants pre-law, there is no turning away," Le Bihan said. This has been a point of the program, which is that all students are able to join the program. "Any students who walk through that door, I get to help," she said. With the number of students, she then hired Jeffrey Stephenson.

"I was overwhelmed, so I brought in Dr. Stephenson, and we work even more together," Le Bihan said. Stephenson has since helped the program gain its 100% acceptance rate.

"All the staff is nice to work with, and I don't think I've had any issues with them," said Thomas Nicholson, an 18-year-old freshman in the pre-law program majoring in political science. Nicholson also highlighted the skills of both teachers. "They are both great, they just have different ways of teaching," he said. Yet, even with

the student support, Le Bihan thinks there is another reason for the increased acceptance rate.

"I was able to secure a grant," she said. This grant gave them the money to hire Stephenson, but also allowed them to do something more for the students. "We brought back the LSAT courses," Le Bihan said. The course is free for students, which is different from many other pre-law programs.

"A lot of students can't afford LSAT courses. Some people will pay \$5,000 for a prep course, but we do it for free," Le Bihan said.

The LSAT is a test that impacts potential law school application acceptance. However, even with hiring Stephenson and having more funding, she hopes for support in the future of the program.

"When UM invests, our students benefit," Le Bihan said. These benefits are classes and educational value, which Le Bihan hopes will continue to work in the future. "I

hope it continues, but I can't tell the future," she said. These investments will help with the goals for the future of the program.

"We would like to have scholarships for students," Le Bihan said. The current program does not have any scholarships. Le Bihan also mentioned she wanted to have a summer bootcamp for students to get applications for law school completed and to improve the community within the pre-law students. But, there is one more issue facing the program.

"We are at capacity. I am giving one-third of my time, and Stephenson is giving half, since he is half-time," Le Bihan said. Outside the program, Le Bihan is also the interim associate dean and a philosophy professor.

"It's one of the best things in the world, to elevate lives," Le Bihan said. She also mentioned that the success of the program has helped her since the students she has helped have been successful. "It really fills my bucket as the preschoolers say," Le Bihan said.

# UM researches causes of homelessness

SAMUEL ARMSTRONG-DUBOIS | NEWS REPORTER  
samuel.armstrong-dubois@umontana.edu

There are many causes of homelessness surrounding mental health, and the University of Montana's Development, Adversity, Resilience and Transformation (DART) Lab has extended research in hopes to better understand the root causes and what services can be provided to prevent it.

Krista Goldstine-Cole, a professor at the University of Montana, has been a major contributor to the DART Lab's research on the causation of homelessness. One of her recent projects focused on the psychological factors that played into homelessness after a community in a Western U.S. state asked for help studying prevention.

The study used a research method she calls "Life Graph with Cards," which charts major risk factors across a person's life. She interviewed 21 people who were currently or recently homeless, asking them to map key life events that contributed to their housing instability.

"The single most surprising thing was the role of the death of a loved one," Goldstine-Cole said.

She said the factor appeared repeatedly in interviews, even though it was not widely discussed in existing research literature.

In many cases, younger participants had been living with relatives who protected them from abusive home environments. When those relatives died, they lost both housing and help navigating social systems such as disability services.

"It came up over and over again that, 'I was living with my grandma and then my grandma died, and I didn't have any place to go,'" she said.

The study also identified several broader pathways that lead into homelessness. "One of them was a disability pathway," she said, where individuals were unable to work and struggled to navigate complicated

support systems.

Another pathway involved economic shock, particularly job losses linked to the Great Recession in 2008.

There was also a pattern of early childhood trauma followed by school struggles, addiction and mental health challenges. "A lot of early trauma and a lot of early adversity followed by difficulty at school, leaving school without graduating," Goldstine-Cole said.

Through the study, the team was able to find that mental health is a vulnerable factor that can degrade regardless of age. For Jacob Walker, who currently faces housing instability, his situation deteriorated a few years ago when he moved to Missoula in hopes of pursuing wrestling with a high school friend. After seeing the series *Yellowstone*, he came to Missoula with his friend to study, wrestle and enjoy the country depicted in the television show.

"I saw the show and said, 'That looks great, they got elk and they're good hunting and eating,'" Walker said.

After a few months of living in town, his roommate started to use meth and became paranoid of Walker, accusing him of sleeping with his girlfriend. Eventually, Walker moved out and became homeless. He made his way to the Poverello Center, where he stayed for a handful of months.

"I'm an alcoholic, I'm open about that, but what's going on at the Pov is so much worse," Walker said.

Currently, Walker couch surfs across Missoula with his girlfriend and hopes to make it to California to see his brother and rebuild their relationship.

Karl Spitzmacher, a Missoula community member, defines his current position as unhoused and often attends city council meetings as he believes it is his right to be vocal about what's going on in the city. "I don't even

associate with the Poverello anymore," Spitzmacher said. "The experience was dehumanizing." He finds housing through family members, such as his aunt, but also often spends nights without shelter.

Coby Daise used to be a psychology student at UM and is now unhoused after failing a class and having to pay the failing fee, putting him into debt so severe that he couldn't purchase a flight back to California. He spends his nights at the Poverello.

All of these are just small insights into how homelessness affects people's mental health and how the situation can develop. While these examples are based in Missoula, research is being conducted in multiple states to better understand the causes.

The DART Lab's research began in December 2024 and is still being analyzed, as qualitative studies require extensive coding of interview data. Still, communities are already using the findings to guide responses. In the community where the research took place, a church leader who heard about the findings started a grief support group after recognizing how often unresolved grief appeared in the interviews.

Missoula Interfaith Collaborative has built a similar program, generating potlucks for the unhoused and any other members to gather and develop a community.



**SUNRISE Saloon**

**Missoula's only Country Western Saloon!**

**3/17 Dance Lessons by Misfit Country  
Dancing @7:15PM!**

**3/18 BINGO @7PM!**

**Tuesdays & Thursdays Karaoke by PRO DJ Services @9PM!**

**1101 Strand Ave, Missoula, MT 59801**

# New adaptation 'Alice/Wonderland' built by students

BEE REISWIG | ARTS REPORTER  
bee.reiswig@umontana.edu

Walking into the Masquer Theatre, an empty stage fills the room, except for one staircase. Actors appear, one by one, each clad entirely in black. Few costume details define iconic characters: backward hats for Tweedledee and Tweedledum, a crown for the Queen of Hearts and blue ribbon details for each of the four Alices that appear on stage.

A staple of "Alice in Wonderland" is the setting and character design, imagined by author Lewis Carroll. Talking flowers, disappearing cats, Alice shrinking to the size of a mouse and growing large enough that her tears become puddles.

Or, at least, it usually is.

University of Montana professor Mark Plonsky's adaptation, "Alice/Wonderland," brings a new take on a classic piece of literature to campus in an ensemble-devised piece. Devising typically means that the production starts only with an ensemble: no characters, no dialogue, nothing. In this case, "Alice" was partially devised with a basis in Plonsky's script. Plonsky said in an email to the Kaimin, "The script and show were put together by way of a creative process of shared ownership among the cast, directors and collaborative team."

Chloe Tschetter, a 20-year-old from Billings, plays the main Alice. The character is 16 years old, compared to the 8-year-old Alice, adult Alice and 80-year-old Alice.

"I think Alice is kind of a second audience," said Tschetter, a sophomore majoring in creative writing and musical theatre. "You're experiencing a lot of the world for the first time with her and you're seeing a lot of the world through her eyes ... She's kind of going on this existential journey, and she's wondering who she is and where she belongs in the world."

The play follows many of the same moments that the book and classic cartoon do. Alice shrinks and grows, she runs into the White Rabbit, she's almost beheaded by the Queen of Hearts. But throughout, there's a sense of the whole cast working together to tell the story.

The ensemble works as set pieces as well as a cast — for example, becoming the rabbit hole that Alice falls through. Characters monologue, sometimes about supposedly unrelated topics that loop back around to themes of mental health as well as personal growth and discovery.

"I love a monologue in the show that's like, 'Take 10 seconds and think about the hands that have shaped you,'" Tschetter



Sydney Tichel sits in a chair while playing a tea party guest during a dress rehearsal of "Alice/Wonderland" on March 3, in the PARTV Center.

TORI KUEHL | MONTANA KAIMIN

said. "When is the last time we've sat and just thought about who we are and who we're becoming and what we're doing here?"

Plonsky, the writer and co-director with Kelly Bouma of "Alice/Wonderland," has been working on the script since last October. Though the script itself was completely pre-written, the process of the play has been partially devised. Essentially, every member of the cast and crew has been able to suggest changes and implement their own creativity into the production.

Jackie Kleinsasser, a 20-year-old acting junior from Great Falls, plays Tweedledee in "Alice/Wonderland," though students were originally cast without knowing their exact roles. Cast decisions came after a week or so of the students and directors coming up with ideas based on the script. Then, more specificity came as the actors were able to play with their characters.

Kleinsasser said the cast would build moments around pieces of dialogue, making those into scenes and ultimately working the different scenes together.

"Mark's biggest thing is, like, 'I have an idea. Show me how bad it is,'" Kleinsasser

said. "If you fully commit to something, you fully commit to anyone's idea, and if it's truly bad — it'll show."

One of the biggest takeaways for Jules Jensen, who is in her senior year of her bachelor of fine arts in acting, was the collaboration that is necessary for devised theatre. The 22-year-old from Great Falls had taken a class called Devising previously, and felt that it prepared her well.

"With other shows it has felt like there is the director there, the guiding force. They have the end-all be-all decision," Jensen said. "And that's not necessarily not true here, but what is definitely true is that there is a director in the room, and there is the entire ensemble, and the entire ensemble has all of the agency."

Jensen plays 80-year-old Alice, who takes a kind of mentorship role for the 16-year-old version of herself throughout the play. One specific moment, in which the caterpillar allows Alice to see the past and present, allows the older Alice to give advice to her younger counterpart.

When Plonsky first decided to re-adapt "Alice in Wonderland," he Googled stage adaptations of the book. According to him,

an article popped up, explaining that every adaptation of "Alice" is doomed to fail — and Plonsky agreed. It's not very high stakes, according to Plonsky, and it's hard to care about the character's journeys.

"We knew it would provide and impart upon the students a rewarding challenge to take on such an expansive, imaginative piece," Plonsky said. "[It's] colorful, goes through many different landscapes, [figuring out] how to bring all that stuff to life with no set and no costumes."

Overall, he explained, he is proud of each of the students who have come together in this production — including his daughter, Laura Plonsky. He said it has been "surprisingly easy to separate the fact that I was there when she was born, and that I can also give her critical notes as an actor."

He's been happy to share the control over the production with the students.

"[Actors] contributions are not just tolerated, they're sought after," Plonsky said. "I may have written the script, but what takes place in there is shared ownership entirely, you know? And now it's all theirs."

Performances of "Alice/Wonderland" will take place March 12-14 at 7:30 p.m. in the Masquer Theatre in the PARTV building.

# The new era of partying

NIAMH O'FARRELL | ARTS REPORTER

niamh.o'farrell@umontana.edu

It's 2012 and you've gotten your sticky hands on your mom's iPad mini so you can watch Ke\$ha's music video for her song "TiKToK" one more time. Now it's 2026, and it's your turn for the bars, the clubs and the parties, but Ke\$ha forgot to mention a price tag.

According to Statista Consumer Insight, between 18% to 20% of Americans of legal drinking age in Generation Z, people born between 1997-2012, say they regularly drink beer, wine or spirits. This is a drop from Millennials, people born between 1981-1996, who consumed alcohol at a much higher percentage of about 30% saying they regularly drank alcohol.

"When I go out it typically costs me anywhere between \$40-\$150," said Kylan Kester, a 22-year-old business management major.

According to the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, since 2019, retailers have tended to see a nationwide increase in alcohol prices of 25%. Because of this rise in prices, bars have had to further increase the prices of drinks in order to earn back the extra money they now have to spend on alcohol.

Cost seems to be skyrocketing everywhere, and it's not just rent and gas prices. Makeup, food, going out clothes and Uber are all staples to a proper night downtown for most college students. These aspects are becoming more and more expensive.

"Between the Uber, drinks and if we get food after, it costs about

\$40. While trying to pay rent and tuition, it can become difficult to afford," said Hannah Johnson, a 22-year-old majoring in business administration.

Going-out clothes have become so expensive that a good alternative to buying full price from stores can be thrifting, yard sales and giving old clothes to friends.

With the average Gen Z salary for a person working full-time in Montana coming out to \$29,300 per year, a raise in prices at bars has made going out for drinks a major obstacle. But this doesn't seem to be the only thing keeping Gen Z away from the bars.

On Nov. 3rd, 2020, Montana officially legalized marijuana for recreational use for those 21 and older, with retail sales beginning in 2022. Since its legalization for recreational use, Missoula has the most dispensaries per capita of any city in the United States.

"It's probably a fourth of the amount of money, mostly because when I buy weed it lasts longer," Kester said.

Marijuana use has grown drastically in popularity among Gen Z, with nearly 60% of Gen Z adults using cannabis at least once a month, making them the largest group of cannabis users in the United States, according to CivicScience.

Prices are up and marijuana has surpassed alcohol in popularity, but that doesn't appear to be the only reason Gen Z is becoming homebodies.

It's no secret that social media has become the place where pop culture and social trends are created. One of the newest obsessions that has come across

social media over the last couple of years has been wellness culture.

Wellness culture is an online phenomenon that centers around aesthetic workouts and lifestyles. Think pink Lululemon sets at a pilates studio and green juice shots while journaling. Putting an emphasis on waking up early and going to bed at 9 p.m. instead of going out on the town. Pushing trends online, such as the 75 Hard challenge, where you follow a strict workout regimen and diet that includes abstaining from alcohol for 75 days. More recently, Dry January has become one of the biggest wellness trends on the internet, where people abstain from drinking for the month of January.

Gen Z has had a social experience unlike any other generation, having come of age during the COVID-19 lockdown and being the first generation to be raised with social media. Navigating socializing is going to be different and it can be hard when you don't want to drink, but it seems like those are the only environments to meet people. For those of you who are taking the popular route of abstaining from alcohol, but still want to meet people, things like swing dancing, workout classes and clubs are a popular and sober way for you to still meet people on campus.



DANE CLEMENTS | MONTANA KAIMIN

# MMA Championship competition

ABIGAIL STENKAMP | SPORTS REPORTER

abigail.stenkamp@umontana.edu

Around 2,500 enthusiastic fans filled the stands and floor of the University of Montana's Adams Center, cheering around tables with beer cans in their hands. A black stage with a huge screen behind it, fog machines and stage lights hyped up the spectators as the fighters walked out. "Click Click Boom" by Saliva echoed inside the arena.

Terrill Bracken, the owner and delegate of Fusion Fight League, the organization in charge of making this event happen, stood in the middle of the ring while the fighters circled around him. Bracken announces, "Alright fighters, let the crowd feel you." Fans cheered and yelled as they prepared to watch the Mixed Martial Arts fights.

MMA is a full contact combat sport that uses different disciplines to win a match. A fighter wins by knocking out their opponent, their opponent tapping out or from a referee stopping the game.

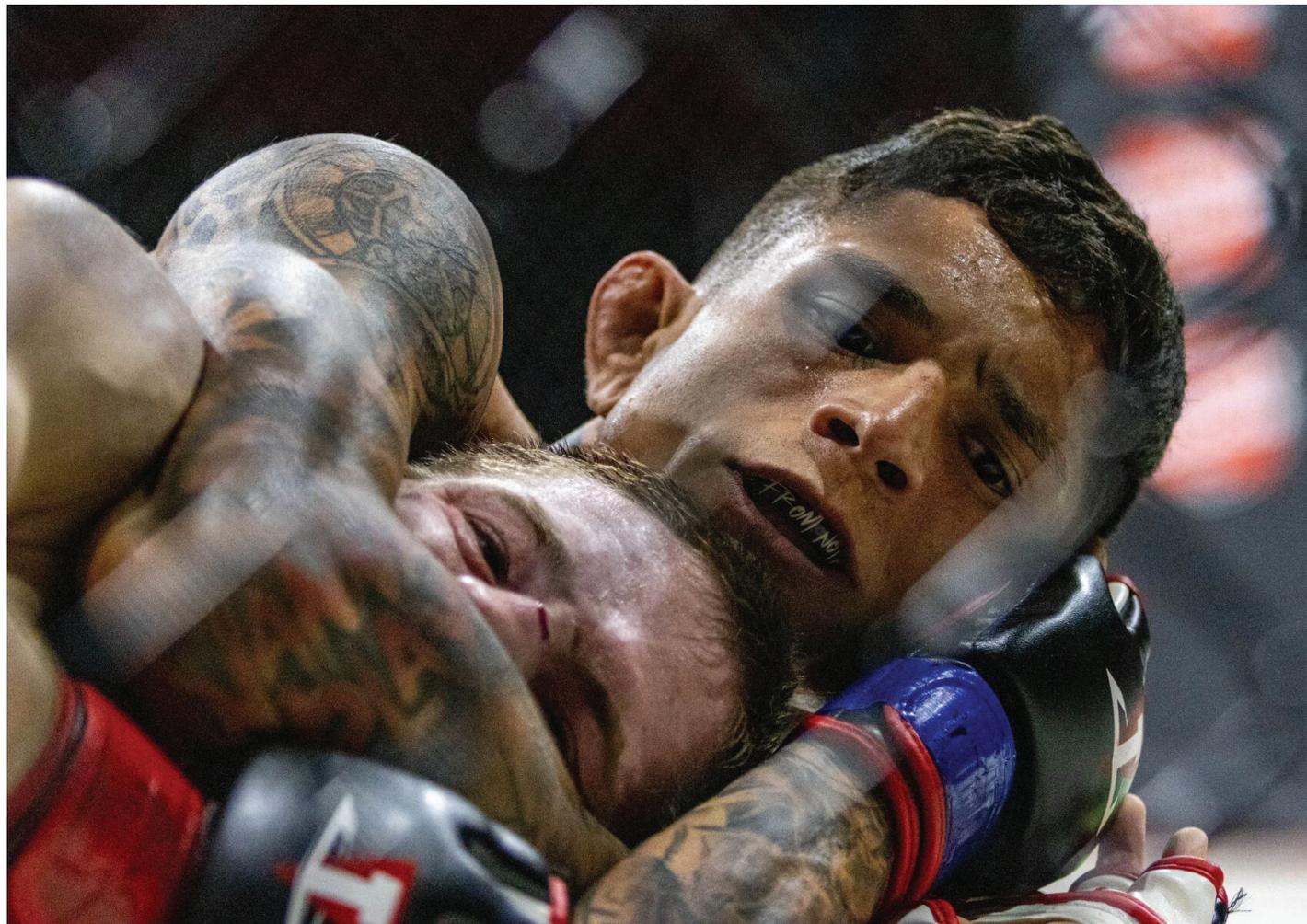
There are many different flavors of fights. Fusion Fight League's Fight Night had 13 total – four pro fights, one bare knuckle fight and six title fights. All the fights were broadcasted live on Facebook.

One crucial part of preparing for the fight is before competitors enter the ring a referee pats them down to make sure they don't have any additional items on them, then someone lathers the fighter's face with petroleum jelly. This is to create a slick barrier between fist and face, so that punches slide right off instead of tearing the skin and causing the fight to end early.

The first fight of the night was a heavyweight title fight between Jesse James, an 18 year-old rookie from Hamilton, Montana with record of 1-0, versus Wayne "Ten" Roberts, a 31 year-old defending champion from Butte, Montana with a record of 4-0.

The event started out with a bang. Within no time, James cornered Roberts and punched him in the face repeatedly, the bell rang and James stepped back as Roberts fell to the ground. In under two minutes James got a knockout and claimed the heavyweight title. Under a video of the fight posted on Instagram, Roberts commented, "That was the best nap of my life."

James has been fighting for about two years now. He said fighting has always intrigued him.



MMA fighter Alex Nevarex tries to choke his opponent, Bryton Hardesty, into submission at Fusion Fight League's Night of Champions at the University of Montana Adams Center on March 7. **JACKSON MAILEY | MONTANA KAIMIN**

"I started watching martial arts movies when I was a kid around 8 or 9 years old, and I just fell in love with it," James said. "I've always wanted to do some type of martial arts since then, I just never knew exactly what. I started doing Jiu-Jitsu and then MMA just developed from there."

In regard to what his family thinks about him fighting, James said, "Well, my dad likes it of course, my mom is very nervous about it but she supports me, my siblings think it is awesome and I thank God for them every day."

James said that for this fight, he spent a lot of time training outside of the dojo because it fell in the middle of the wrestling season.

Roni Bumgarden, one of his trainers, said, "This is only his second fight. After winning his first, the only person that would like to fight against him was the champ."

In order to prepare for the fight, James said, "We did a lot of striking, and getting ready for that, preparing for defending takedowns and clinching onto the cage. This guy [Wayne Ten] is a brown belt in Jiu-Jitsu, so we got ready for his grappling mostly."

James trains through Olsen Behring, a training company run by former fighter Brandon Olsen from Corvallis, Montana, who has an impressive list of accomplishments in the MMA and

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, such as being a Universal Martial Arts Hall of Famer.

"Anybody who wants to fight in our area comes to me," Olsen said. "We make these guys awesome."

He judges when his students are ready to get into the cage based on their desire and drive. "It takes a lot of guts not only to get in there, but after you are in there you start getting hit and kicked and taking punishment," Olsen said. "You have to want to keep going. And if you aren't the right type of person, you'll give up."

His dojo's success was exemplified when their other fighter Michael Kampel claimed the lightweight title during his fight against Anthony Juckes, the

# comes to Adams Center

defending champion. During the rematch fight, held two years ago, Kampel repeated history when he knocked Jukes to the ground and held him in a rear naked choke to secure the win during the first round.

Kampel said, "This rematch turned out similar to the first fight. I expected him to come out brawling like he did, and he has good wrestling and he didn't want to take me out because I have better Jiu-Jitsu. So, I just caught him real close and quick and kicked him down."

When asked how Kampel prepared for his fight he said, "Same thing as always just hitting the gym every day. I own a moving company so lifting heavy things all day is good training, and just practice hard and train hard."

Fusion Fight League has been hosting events in the Adams Center since 2023 and has a few events every year. The experience that it brings to Missoula is very important for competitors and fans alike. Similarly to other big production events hosted on campus, there is a big team of people who help in order to make the event a success.

Bracken said, "It takes a lot of people to put on the show, there are a lot of people behind the scenes and they work very hard."

Deborah Gladvack has been working as a part-time event staff employee with the University of Montana for 15 years. From her years of experience, Gladvack said, "I never know where I'm going to be at any given event, but that's fine. I'm ready for anything."

Gladvack worked the first Fight Night event hosted by a different company back in 2012. "You would think with the fights that people are going to get really riled up, but every time I work this event they are actually really mellow and respectful," she said.

During the events, spectators are constantly on the edge of their seats. During matches the crowd is relatively quiet. Other than the occasional heckle, most people hang on every punch that is thrown. When a big move is made, people pipe up and go wild.

Myla Clark and Jane Johnson are both education majors at Montana State University who drove to Missoula to support their friend and to learn more about the world of MMA.

"Everybody has fun at these events whether the person they're rooting for wins or loses," Johnson said.

"The amount of work and time that goes into being at this level is seriously insane," Clark said. "These people have trained

years towards becoming how skilled they are. It's just really awesome to watch!"

Fusion Fight League's next event is in Great Falls, Montana on April 11, 2026, where they are hosting Holloway V. Wagner in the Montana Expo Park.



Tim Curry delivers a high kick against his opponent, Brandt Simmons, at Fusion Fight League's Night of Champions at the Adams Center on March 7. **JACKSON MAILEY | MONTANA KAIMIN**



MMA fighter Royce Conklin sits on top of the fight cage, celebrating his win at Fusion Fight League's Night of Champions at the Adams Center on March 7. **JACKSON MAILEY | MONTANA KAIMIN**

## SPORTS BRIEFS

HANNAH BENITEZ | SPORTS EDITOR  
hannah.benitez@umontana.edu

### DEFEATS IN THE QUARTERS

The Lady Griz basketball team saw its season end after a quarterfinal loss in Starch Madness to the Montana State Bobcats.

However, to face off the second seed Bobcats, the eighth seed Lady Griz had to beat the seventh seed Northern Arizona University, 61-60.

The Griz had to face off without its star player, Avery Waddington, who led the Lady Griz in scoring, rebounding, assists, steals, and blocks, after she was sidelined with a sickness.

UM led with a perfect record with free throws and 34.9% in field goals.

As the Brawl of the Wild quarterfinal matchup started, the Lady Griz quickly found themselves down, after losing 23-7 in the first quarter.

The Cats led in free throws with 88.9% to UM's 70% and in field goals with 42.3% to UM's 40.4%.

### KEEPING IT GOING

The University of Montana men's basketball team defeated the University of Northern Colorado Bears 95-89 in the second round of Starch Madness.

It was a rematch game from the regular season where Montana won the first game 88-79 but lost the second game 85-57.

UM led the first half 49-32, but the Bears were able to wrestle their way back in the second half of the game.

"We're just doing a better job scoring on the floor, we didn't do that well a couple of weeks ago. Fatigue kinda set in on us a little bit. Defensively we're doing a great job taking away the three point line," Travis DeCuire, UM's head coach, said at halftime.

Junior Money Williams won player of the game after securing 40 points and six rebounds.

# Gaming Den hosts bingo night

TORI KUEHL | PHOTOGRAPHER  
tori.kuehl@umontana.edu

The University of Montana's Gaming Den gives students the opportunity to experience the rush of getting a "bingo" every other Wednesday night at 7 p.m. in the University Center.

At the bingo night hosted on March 4, the Gaming Den offered puzzles, a



Jake Cabbage, the student supervisor of the Gaming Den, reads off bingo numbers in the Gaming Den Lounge on March 4.



Taylor Awbery, a sophomore at the University of Montana, marks a spot on her bingo card.

beanie and University of Montana-themed socks as prizes for the seven participants. The event switched between aiming for bingos, Xs and blackouts to win. Friends sat and laughed with each other as hosts read out bingo numbers for a night of friendly competition on the UC's second floor.

The Gaming Den hosts a variety of events throughout the school year. Bingo and trivia occur on alternating weeks, in addition to other themed events and tournaments. Students can also rent pool, table tennis and video games for \$3 per hour.

"Students are looking for places to belong. They're looking for communities. They're looking for things to do with friends, to get out and to step out of the

academic sphere," said Cale Patenaude, the assistant director of student life, belonging and recreation at the University.

The goal of the Gaming Den is to provide a space for students to de-stress and have fun, all while meeting students where they are at socially and financially. The Gaming Den often hosts free play nights for those who otherwise might not be able to afford it.

Jake Cabbage, the student supervisor at the Gaming Den and this week's bingo host, said he had the chance to foster connections through his attendance at events even before he got his job.

"One of my best friends I met here in the Gaming Den. He was my pool instructor and I'd been seeing him in here forever, and we finally met, and now

we're like, you know, the best of friends," Cabbage said. "I think it's really cool, you get people who have this common interest and give them a space to meet each other."

Taylor Awbery, a sophomore, attended bingo with her friends on Wednesday night. Although she doesn't make it to the Gaming Den often, she enjoys having it as an option.

"I just enjoy coming here and playing games with my friends. I think that's the best part," Awbery said.

The Gaming Den hosts one themed party every semester. This spring, the Lord of the Rings Tolkien Day celebration will happen on March 25. The celebration's theme is fellowship, community and unsung heroes and it will include themed food, decorations, games and prizes.



A group of students play bingo in the Gaming Den Lounge on March 4.