

MONTANA KAIMIN

Forgotten by design

With a wave of new construction, staff and students fight to have equal accessibility in existing campus buildings

Story by Lauren Reinhart | Photos by James Maxwell Benton

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September 19, 2024 | Volume 127 | Issue No. 4



Kiosk



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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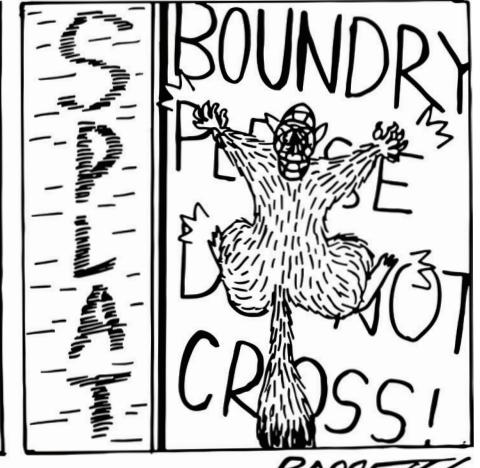
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DETECTIVE SQUIRREL: SE 2 EP 2



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

BARRETT

Inaccessibility, my old 'friend'

SUDOKU

Edited by Margie E. Burke

Difficulty: Easy

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

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:

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

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Events for the week of Sept. 19 to Sept. 25

THURSDAY

- Griz soccer vs. Boise State | South Campus Stadium | 4 p.m.
- Super Smash Bros. Ultimate tournament | UC Gaming Den | 6:30 to 11 p.m.
- Outdoor movie night: Guardians of the Galaxy | The Oval | 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY

- Griz football vs. Western Carolina | Washington-Grizzly Stadium | 1 p.m.
- An Autumn Opera Gala | Zootown Arts Community Center | 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY

- Griz soccer vs. Arkansas Pine-Bluff | South Campus Stadium | 1 p.m.

MONDAY

- American Indian Heritage Week begins | University of Montana

WEDNESDAY

- Lawn games with UM Advocates | The Oval | 3 to 5 p.m.

As a student with a degenerative musculoskeletal disorder affecting my knees, back and hands, my time at the University of Montana has been characterized by inaccessibility, and I'm not alone. The Montana Kaimin has written at length about the daily accessibility problems faced by disabled students.

Long before I even considered working at the newspaper, I ended up as a source in a cover story about the structural barriers disabled students faced. Two years later, I can't say things have gotten any better.

The historian in me always wants to look backward at a problem, to tackle it from the roots, so I began digging through past Kaimin stories.

I expected to find that, much like myself, students in the past were frustrated with what they feel is inadequate accessibility. Unfortunately, I was proven right, as many of the grievances reflected my own experiences.

One story from an issue in September 1989 compared UM's relative accessibility to other campuses in Montana. Ultimately, a survey done by UM's facilities found bleak results. Nineteen buildings on campus were found inaccessible for students in wheelchairs, while no other university surveyed had a problem with accessibility.

In a February 2000 issue, Jim Marks, then-director of disability services for students, spoke at length about how UM has "created a world where disability is not something to be ashamed of," and how it is "getting better at improving access and leveling the educational playing field for disabled students."

All of this research is to say one thing: Accessibility and accommodation for disabled students has been and continues to be a problem at UM.

I'm not unsympathetic to how difficult it is to make spaces accessible. It takes time, labor and money, and disabled students know that. It's unreasonable to expect immediate change in a world of bureaucracy, but many students also feel it's unreasonable to expect us to happily hang out forever in accessibility limbo.

I feel bad saying it, but I don't think I'm on a "level educational playing field," even 24 years after Marks bragged about UM's accessibility. Students on a level playing field don't have to worry about elevators being out of service or if a door button is turned on that day.

I feel even worse saying accessibility seems to have eroded in my time here, but I know it's true because it affects my life every day. Little things that students without disabilities don't have to think about are life changing to me. If a door button isn't working, for example, I can't always just open the door. If I'm carrying something in my non-cane-holding hand, or if my pain levels are high, I have to rely on

the kindness of strangers to get in or out of a building.

There's a way to look at the things everyday students have had to do to help myself and other disabled students as inspiring and uplifting. You can make a very compelling case for, say, someone helping a wheelchair-using student get home safely in a snowstorm as a testament to the heart and sense of community at UM. You can also make an argument that it's demoralizing and unfair to everyone.

There's also a level of unfair competition for resources. When accessibility is scarce, the needs of different people come into conflict.

For example, this year I haven't been able to find parking even once close to where I need to go. On one hand, it's nice to take part in a ubiquitous traditional UM experience. On the other, though, is the fact that walking a couple blocks to class is a wildly different story for me than most students. It also puts me in an awkward position — I want to use the resources meant to make my life easier and safer, but I also don't want to take them from someone else.

If you've read this far and are hoping for some kind of big, easy answer, then I'm sorry to disappoint. One of the very unfortunate truths about accessibility is that true equality of resources is, at least in our current world, generally unattainable.

With that said, though, I don't think disabled students are looking for a miracle solution. We all know that's unrealistic. What I am looking for is transparency and a willingness to work with us. More than wanting new infrastructure, I want what already exists to be properly and consistently maintained.

Last week, a handicap door button disappeared from the main University Center entrance. I don't just want it to be put back. I want to be part of a conversation about why it was removed, and what we can do to have an accessible solution that works the best for the most people.

I have a lot of empathy for UM when it comes to accessibility. New buildings and updates to old ones cost money. I understand systemic injustices are hard to dismantle and correct. That's not what I'm upset about. What's frustrating to me is that it feels like the institutions in place to improve accessibility don't have the same kind of empathy for the students they serve.

— Keely Proebstel, arts & culture editor

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Montana civic engagement organization rebrands; Student Senate passes resolutions; UM lists fall 2024 distinguished alumni

LEADERS OF HIGHER EDUCATION DETERMINE THE FUTURE OF NETWORKING

Leaders and administrators of universities and colleges across Montana have rebranded the Montana Campus Compact organization with hopes to improve student engagement.

On Sept. 9, the organization held a virtual press conference to announce how it is evolving to the Montana Campus Network for Civic Engagement. This network includes 18 public, private and tribal institutions that have decided to separate the organization from the national level to continue serving at the state level.

The mission of the organization is to help educate students in civic duties while partnering with communities to support involvement in community service and engagement. As part of this mission, UM established its first Democracy Summit last year, which included student and staff discussions about complex issues and ideas to help build community in a democratic society.

"This day-long event really challenged our students and employees to engage in important conversations and workshops that are really core to civic engagement," UM Spokesperson Dave Kuntz said.

In 1993, under the umbrella of the National Campus Compact, eight colleges and university leaders from Montana, including George Dennison, the 16th president of the University of Montana, founded the Montana Campus Compact branch. The state organization has been directly connected with the national group for the last 30 years until it rebranded its format in 2022, separating from the national group completely.

"[Presidents and chancellors] really felt like we had an obligation to the state of Montana, to all work together to engage our students around civic engagement and community service," John Cech, president of Carroll College said. "And that's the key to the success of our state and, quite frankly, the future of our state."

This network of campus leaders said they hope to continue to support training resources, scholarships, awards and the AmeriCorps programs as a commitment to serve the higher education community in Montana.

"We are appreciative of our time with Campus Compact, but let's rebrand ourselves and keep this going with a very Montana-specific focus," Josh Vanek, executive director of the group, said.

(Emily Messer)

STUDENT SENATE PASSES NEW RESOLUTIONS, SPARKS DEBATE AT MEETING

President of the University of Montana's student government Elizabeth Kamminga and her team engaged in a busy agenda at a recent meeting on Wednesday, Sept. 11. Chief of Staff Kelly Webster presented the FY25 institutional playbook, highlighting significant enrollment statistics that will shape the future planning of the academic playbook. The Senate recognized 11 student groups for their contributions and approved three finance requests from the Forestry Club, Society of American Foresters and Griz Club Soccer, for things like travel and gear upgrades.

Two resolutions were also passed, including SB11, which revised the Senate's fiscal policy and sparked a 40-minute debate.

Proposed by the current business manager Natalie Schoen, the revision proposed shifting the responsibility of labeling student groups as either a sport, academic or interest group during the final budgeting process from just the business manager to the Board on Member Organizations Committee, which is chaired by the business manager. The proposal aimed to increase transparency and reduce potential bias. Some senators expressed concerns about the additional workload during the already stressful final budgeting period, recalling last year's late meetings lasting, at times, until 2 a.m.

Kamminga, however, assured the Senate it will be improving the workload of senators by planning a better meeting schedule, but maintains the Senate's duty is to serve the student body.

Despite the debate, Kamminga emphasized the importance of rigorous discus-

sion, stating, "Our senators were having a lively debate, and we highly encourage that." The resolution was passed with unanimous approval.

(Hope Morrison)

UM ANNOUNCES 2024 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

The University of Montana Alumni Association named five people to receive this year's distinguished alumni awards: Steven Capener, David Enger, Fat Lam, Robert McKinnon and Steve McNeece. UM News described the recipients as individuals who have distinguished themselves in their field and are respected in their careers and communities.

Lam, a recipient who graduated in 1987 with a doctorate in mathematics, originally grew up in Hong Kong. At 10, he began to lose his hearing but continued his schooling for three years. At 13, Lam worked both as a tailor and a carpenter to support his family.

It wasn't until Lam flipped through a catalog of U.S. colleges that he discovered Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. Gallaudet, a college dedicated to educating deaf students, made him realize he would be able to further his education in the U.S. After receiving a bachelor's and master's degree from Gallaudet in mathematics, and his doctorate from UM, he returned to Gallaudet to teach and eventually became the chairman of their mathematics and computer science department before retiring in 2014.

Lam and the four other recipients will return to UM and receive their awards during the homecoming week banquet on Friday, Oct. 11 at 5:30 p.m.

(Corbin Vanderby)

POLICE BLOTTER

EMMA WHITE

emma.white@umontana.edu

It's been a pretty quiet week for all of you mischief-makers. Maybe the semester dread has begun to set in as you receive your first grades of the term and face the consequences of your debauchery. Decided to put away your beers and bongs, stay home and squint at the 80-page PDF you were supposed to read two weeks ago, didn't you? We'll see how long it lasts.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 6 - HIT N' RUN

A minor hit-and-run was reported in lot P in the morning, with minor property damage being the only result. The University of Montana Police Department said it was likely that the driver was not aware of nicking the car. Tighten up, guys. I may not be the world's best driver, but at least I can tell when I hit something.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 8 - CLEVER KEY-ER

A 2016 blue Nissan was found keyed outside Aber Hall at 7:30 p.m., leaving about \$1,000 worth of damage. The owner said it was possible his car was keyed at church earlier that day, but he noticed the damage after it was parked at Aber for some time. Damn, someone's having troubles in paradise. Maybe you weren't on a break?

MONDAY SEPT. 9 - ASSAULT

An assault occurred around 7 a.m. on Maurice Avenue. A student was walking to school when she had the sense that someone was following her. An unknown individual approached her from behind and yanked her hair back from her head before running away. This case is open, and no suspects have been found so far. Jokes aside, please look out for each other and let campus police know if there's any information you have about this incident.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 10 - BYE BYE BLADES

It was a sad day for skaters everywhere when a thief stole a backpack, an assortment of clothing, a hard-backed suitcase and a pair of women's rollerblades from a storage closet in the University apartments at Laurin Court. Major party foul, guys. There are some lines you just don't cross, and taking a girl's blades is one of them. I hope the thief at least made their getaway in style.

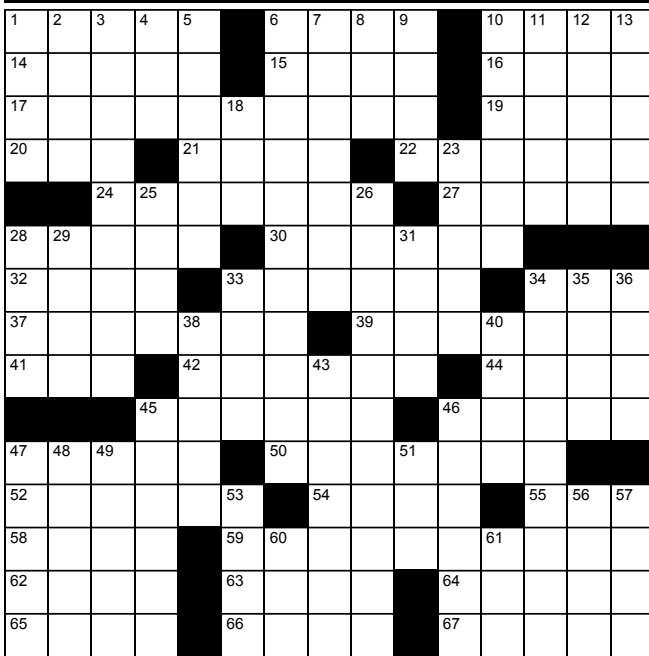
Can't get enough? Start listening.

In last week's episode, hear Chandler Lieb talk about a new norm at the University of Montana — a League of Legends player who is also a leader in the U.S. military.



New episodes out every other Monday. Scan for the latest.

The Weekly Crossword by Margie E. Burke



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ACROSS

- 1 Perching places
- 6 Tomb-raiding Croft
- 10 "___ that special?!"
- 14 Parting word
- 15 Versed in
- 16 Have words (with)
- 17 Diverse populace
- 19 Volcano flow
- 20 Good buddy
- 21 Forum wear
- 22 Far from fearless
- 24 'Maggie May' singer Rod
- 27 Sprain site
- 28 Cast a ballot
- 30 Actor Depardieu
- 32 Vitamin additive
- 33 Mammal's coat
- 34 Most "Esquire" readers
- 37 Adam of "Hustle"
- 39 Nazi police
- 41 Ginger ___
- 42 Goes away
- 44 Battery fluid
- 45 Did the tango
- 46 Common sci-fi setting
- 47 Pressing need?
- 50 Made booties, maybe
- 52 Plaid fabric
- 54 Drop from the eye
- 55 Goings-on
- 58 Assist in wrongdoing
- 59 Like some glasses
- 62 Spanish Steps city
- 63 Mideast's Gulf of ___
- 64 Aquatic nymph
- 65 Little hopper
- 66 Lothario's look
- 67 Things to strive for
- 28 Traveler's need, maybe
- 29 Rev. Roberts
- 31 Forever and a day
- 33 Part of a hammerhead
- 34 Australian nut
- 35 Sweeping
- 36 Focal point
- 38 Camel's kin
- 40 VCR insert
- 43 Opposite of dorsal
- 45 Made sudden moves
- 46 Yo-yo need
- 47 TV spy Maxwell
- 48 Social no-no
- 49 Plant malady
- 51 Road goo
- 53 Drive off
- 56 It may be raw
- 57 Bettor's concern
- 60 Texter's "Holy moly!"
- 61 ___ Zedong

DOWN

- 1 Tiffany product
- 2 Creative spark
- 3 Heavy burden
- 4 Poker play
- 5 Fit
- 6 Samsonite stand
- 7 Shirts and skirts
- 8 Pooh pal
- 9 Picnic crashers
- 10 Cuba or Aruba
- 11 Kindle
- 12 Orange variety
- 13 Kind of show
- 18 Right this minute
- 23 Worries
- 25 Keep an eye on
- 26 Lady Macbeth portrayer, e.g.

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

Cozy-o-scope

KEELY PROEBSTEL

keely.proebstel@umontana.edu

It's the most wonderful time of the year: autumn. Yes, fall has once again begun in western Montana. With temperatures already starting to plummet, look to the stars to find your perfect way to stay cozy and beat the chill of spooky season.

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 22): Cleanliness is next to coziness and no one knows that better than you. Grab a pumpkin spice bath bomb, light some candles and relax. Just don't fall asleep in the tub or you'll be a ghost this Halloween!

LIBRA (SEP. 23-OCT. 22): We're already getting to that stressful part of the semester, so try balancing yourself with self-care. Get some sheet masks, put on some chill music and take a restful little nap. You'll be feeling more relaxed in no time.

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21): Pumpkin spice lattes are for babies. Badasses like you take your coffee black with a shot of real Irish whiskey. There's something magical about sipping barrel-aged booze while watching the leaves fall and also something magical about the way it gets you drunk.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21): Nothing says adventure like a raging bonfire on a crisp autumn night. Nothing says cozy like perfectly toasted marshmallows. Sag, it's time to find some pallets and build yourself a monster flame. But please resist the intense urge to put the marshmallow in the fire, nobody likes that guy.

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19): Who says you can't be comfy and productive? Knitting and crocheting are the perfect indoorsy activities. Especially for homebodies like you, Cap. If you're fast enough, you could snuggle up with a blanket as you work on it.

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18): You don't have to stay inside to stay warm. A trip to a hot spring is a great free-spirited way to relax. Breathe in the cool fall air

and bask in the cozy vibes. And try not to eat absolute shit as you slip your way back down the trail.

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20): You're a natural at making friends, so cuddling up with a fuzzy one is perfect for you. It doesn't matter if you're a dog, cat or rat person, but if you live in an apartment, perhaps you should consider the plush variety. Either way, it's a fantastic snuggly way to spend an afternoon.

ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19): There's nothing quite as homey as the literal genre of cozy video games like "Animal Crossing" and "Stardew Valley." Grab some snacks and a fuzzy blanket and fire up your laptop. It's the perfect way to spend a lazy fall day, and it'll keep you from being bored.

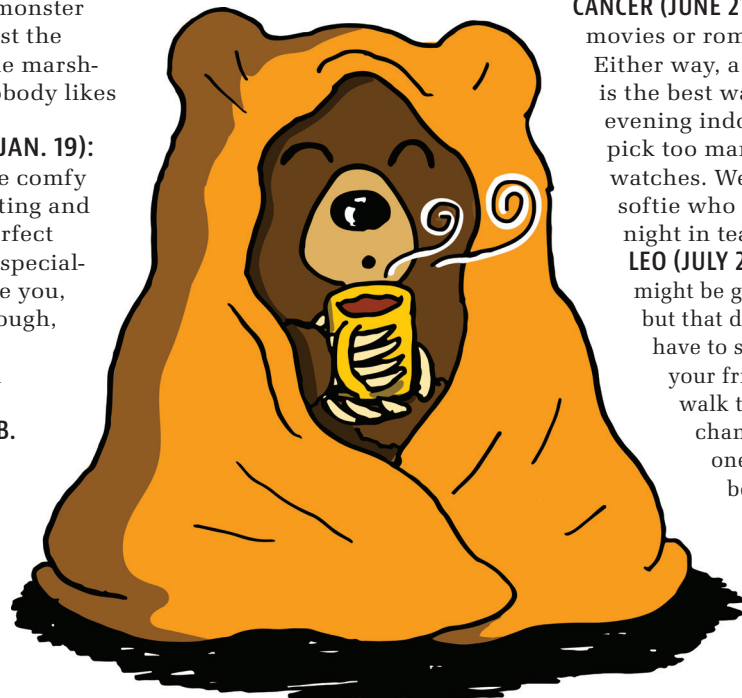
TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20): Baking cookies is a triple threat: It makes your house smell good, the oven warms everything up and you can get snug and watch TV while they bake. It's perfect for someone as chill as you, Taurus.

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20): Throw on some comfy designer sweats and grab your favorite hot drink. Your fall plans need to be as adaptable as you are, Gem. Whether you're snagging some squash down at the farmer's market or watching a trashy horror comedy at the Roxy, you'll be doing it in cozy style.

CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22): Horror movies or romantic comedies?

Either way, a movie marathon is the best way to spend a cool evening indoors — just don't pick too many emotional watches. We know you're a softie who could end their night in tears, Cancer.

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22): It might be getting cooler out, but that doesn't mean you have to stay indoors. Gather your friends and go on a walk to drool over the changing leaves. Someone as vibrant as you is bound to enjoy such a cozy little adventure.



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

UM's digital Griz cards: Efficiency vs. security challenge

HOPE MORRISON

hope.morrison@umontana.edu

After running out to grab a textbook from his car last semester, Seth Anderson found himself locked out of his dorm. It was 2 a.m. on finals week at the University of Montana, and Anderson's Griz card had stopped working.

Left with no access to the building and no ability to contact someone to let him in, Anderson pressed the nearest blue light button to talk to campus police.

"It was really loud, and it woke a bunch of people up," he said, comparing it to the noise of an ambulance.

Anderson said another student heard the noise and let him in, and he had to speak to the emergency system and call off the police officer on their way.

Beginning in the fall of 2023, UM transitioned from physical, hand-held Griz cards to a tappable digital wallet, now accessible on students' phones. Griz cards work as a student ID, providing building access and student account funds. Despite the University's promise that building access would remain available even if a phone battery was depleted, some students have had issues. Newer students are now limited to using digital Griz cards, while students who enrolled before fall 2023 can continue using their previously activated physical cards.

According to Dave Kuntz, UM spokesperson, the transition to the new system has been in the works for many years to better align with best practices.

"A lot of institutions and employers have transitioned their ID cards from a physical card to a phone since most folks have smartphones and carry them with them," Kuntz said.

Apple first introduced its digital wallet feature in 2018, rolling out the first digital IDs in collaboration with Duke University. Since then, over a hundred universities have adopted digital IDs, according to The College Post. Yet local universities such as Montana State University or Montana Technological University have



DANE CLEMENTS | MONTANA KAIMIN

not adopted the same practices as UM. "There's more efficiency for the University to be handing out IDs through the phone rather than physical cards," Kuntz said. "Rather than students having to go have their photo taken, have the card printed and having to pay the card fee, everything now is much more streamlined."

Kuntz mentioned another upside was avoiding security problems the University has faced in the past.

"If someone were to lose a Griz card, especially if it had building access, that's a security issue," he said.

Yet, Anderson felt that his security was even more at risk with the use of digital Griz cards, rather than a physical one that might be lost.

"Looking back, I'm so thankful that [the student] trusted me and offered to let me in, I had no way to prove that I was actually a student or lived in Knowles," he said.

After being left outside for more than 30 minutes, Anderson said the entire situa-

tion left him feeling scared, embarrassed and ashamed, leading him to give up on studying for his final the next day.

"I mean, I think I passed it, but it was not pretty," he said.

One of the primary drawbacks of digital cards is their reliance on smartphones. If a student's phone runs out of battery, malfunctions or is lost, they are effectively locked out of campus buildings, services and dining options. According to Kuntz, digital Griz cards are supposed to work even after a phone's battery has died.

The use of digital Griz cards has also led to a shift in security practices. On April 28, 2024, an active shooter threat, later deemed a hoax, caused campus police to shut down all building access, allowing no student or faculty to enter or leave any building. However, as Griz card scanners also impact ability to access dorm hallway bathrooms, many students were left without access to the bathroom during the hour-long shutdown.

Additionally, not all campus facilities

are equipped to process 'tappable' Griz cards. For example, the Fitness and Recreation Center's climbing wall has a system where students can verify their belay certification by scanning their Griz card. However, this system only accepts physical card swipes and doesn't support digital cards, as it hasn't been updated yet.

Students only have the option to opt for physical cards if they have a phone that does not work with the digital wallet option, but they are required to pay \$15 for the new card. This was the case for Nia Guest, who at the time of move-in, had a phone that was unable to do contactless payment, meaning it couldn't use 'tap' features that are reliant for building access to residential halls, campus dining and other services.

"I figured it out trying to get into the Aber bathrooms, which was unfortunate," Guest said. She was issued a physical card for most of the school year, however, she said it was one of the factors that led her to purchase a new phone that did have the capability to "tap."

Another factor that went into the transition from physical to digital IDs was sustainability. Kuntz said that it's better "not having so much plastic go out the door that is required for these cards, and instead using the existing infrastructure we have with phones people purchase."

The transition has proved useful within the last year, according to Kuntz, who said there is a lower rate of replacement cards now than there was before the transition.

"Lots of students would lose their cards over the summer, then come back for their sophomore or junior year and need to go back through the process," Kuntz said.

With the use of digital Griz cards leading to security concerns, discussions within the student Senate began last year. Current student government President Elizabeth Kamminga said she "definitely" plans on revisiting the issue within the student equity committee and discussing possible solutions in the upcoming weeks.

Email scams rise at UM

EMILY MESSER

Emily.Messer@umontana.edu

Floating in the inbox of Brianna Gusky's Outlook account sat a pile of emails, but one caught her eye, promising of money she needed to make ends meet.

But clicking on that offer would turn sour for Gusky, a sophomore at the time, and now a 2023 graduate of the University of Montana.

"The email kind of outlined a really promising amount of money, which was way more than I was making at Dairy Queen," she said.

Email scams have been going on since the early 1990s, occasionally feeding through students' inboxes using a practice called phishing, where a scammer poses as a trustworthy company in order to get personal information to steal money. Scammers often send out emails about resetting a password via links, job offers or, in some cases, with fake UM websites to obtain information, according to Jonathan Neff, chief information security officer. This fall semester, the University has already seen a significant increase in reported scams. Through emails, it has warned students to be aware of possible identity theft or loss of money.

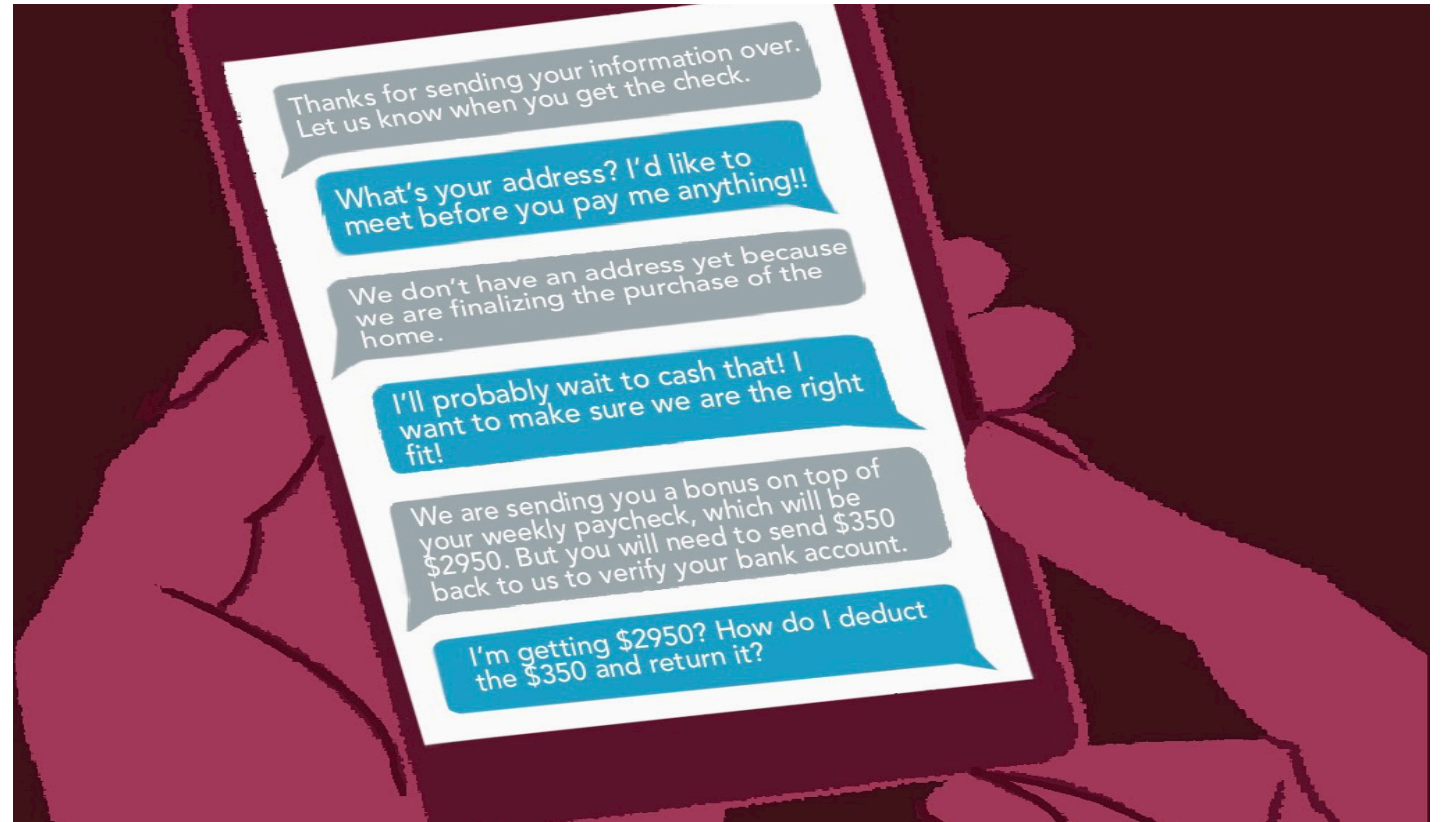
The job offer Gusky received was a home health aide position, which seemed like the perfect fit for her, having prior experience in that field. The sender outlined she would need to work about 10 hours a week for a \$700 weekly paycheck.

As a first generation college student paying her own tuition, Gusky was eager for anything to ease finances. Gusky immediately applied for the position, sending over her personal information, and was given the job with no interview.

"Basically the sender said, 'You're hired!' and that's when I got my first red flag, because I was like, 'Who would trust somebody to take care of their disabled mother who they haven't even met?'" she said.

Gusky went on to explain the text messages between her and the scammer, where she asked to meet multiple times and asked for a physical Missoula address, which the scammer could not provide. The person ignored her requests for some time, explaining they were not from Missoula and were working to purchase a house in town.

The sender then texted that she would be receiving a check in the mail for \$2,950, which came out to be significantly higher than she was expecting. However, the scam-



JULIA BRANEN | MONTANA KAIMIN

mer asked for \$350 to verify Gusky's bank account.

"See, this is where it got really confusing. I was like, 'They want to deposit it and then send money back?'" Gusky said.

Most job scams function by sending a person a bad check and then requesting back some money for whatever reason, costing the person the amount they sent, according to Neff. However, Neff explained there are many ways the information technology department at UM tries to stop emails like these from getting through including Microsoft Exchange Online Protection and Defender for Office 365.

The protection service is a cloud-based protection designed to filter emails to protect organizations from spam or malicious software that could steal data or damage computer software. Defender for Office 365 collects and analyzes threats regarding the Microsoft 365 systems on the delivering side of emails. These two programs come with the Microsoft licensing package the University has.

These services don't stop every email from

getting through, but they do add a significant level of protection. In the week of Sept. 2 to Sept. 8, 2024, there were about 196,000 inbound emails with threats detected by Microsoft, according to the Mail Flow Status Report provided by Neff. Of those emails, Neff said around 60 emails were compromised by hackers, with around half being students'.

On the occasion that a scam email does get through to a student or employee's inbox, Neff said students should report it to Outlook. These reported scams then alert Microsoft and the tech security team, allowing them to better filter similar scams in the future. When an email does contain a scam link, tech teams can see how many people clicked on it and will reach out to reset credentials to those affected.

This allows the security team to assess the phish and helps Microsoft better detect more potential scams. Neff also highly recommended people not use the same passwords for various platforms, because once a scammer gains those credentials they may be able to access other platforms.

In this case, once Gusky learned her job offer was a scam, she did not deposit the fake check or send any money to the scammer. Gusky said this experience rattled her, and she went straight to the UM Police Department to report the situation, fearing the scammer had all her information. Unfortunately, in most cases, UMPD can't do anything with this information.

"We don't have any technology, and I don't think anybody really does, to track them down." UM police chief Brad Giffin said. "And even if you track them down and find out they're overseas, we don't really have jurisdiction there anyways." As of August 2024, the police department has received three reports of online theft or fraud.

If the problem gets worse, the University could potentially change its email system to an internal-only format, which is a system public schools use to protect minors from predatory email threats. However, this would prevent students and employees from sending any external emails but, Neff explained, from a risk standpoint, this might be something to consider.

Forgotten by design



What the University of Montana is doing to keep buildings accessible, and why the process has been slower than students would like

Story by Lauren Reinhart

Photos by James Maxwell Benton

Charlie Eurick stands in front of Main Hall with their forearm crutches, an aid for their chronic pain.

Amid the chatter of students walking to and from classes, Charlie Eurick looked up a set of winding stairs. Eurick was stuck, slowed down. Eurick uses a pair of forearm crutches to help ease their chronic pain, a condition that flares up with extended strenuous movement.

“I almost always have a dull ache in [my hips and knees], and standing or walking for too long can cause the pain to become sharper and more unbearable,” Eurick said.

Even getting in and out of their dorm is becoming a challenge. Eurick lives in Knowles Hall, a residence hall at the University of Montana that was renovated last year.

It wasn’t even a month into the semester when Eurick found themselves staring up the winding stairwell in Knowles. The elevator had broken down for the third time that month. So, Eurick forced themselves up the stairs to get to their residence hall room on the fourth floor. The sounds of laughter and conversation echoed through the stairwell, muting the sound of Eurick and their crutches.

Eurick’s roommate, who also has a

movement disability, was unable to get up to their room on the fourth floor and had to stay in emergency housing twice last year.

“I was so excited to finally be able to be comfortable moving around campus this year, but as my health is declining, UM is not shaping up and I feel like I’m facing more troubles than ever,” Eurick said.

According to the UM website, the University works with the Missoula Housing Authority, Poverello Center, Salvation Army and Young Women’s Christian Association to set up emergency housing for students with physical disabilities to have a place to stay when there are mechanical

issues in their residence hall.

“As soon as my [resident assistant] knocked on my door to let us know about the elevator when it broke most recently, I was ready to start screaming in frustration,” Eurick said.

This is their second year at the University and they have become increasingly frustrated with its unbalanced accessibility.

As UM adds more accessible buildings across campus, older facilities remain overlooked. Some campus officials say they are aware of the need for renovation, but students like Eurick are left wondering when changes will be made, and if they will be effective.

Accessibility issues on campus have forced Eurick to choose their classes and housing carefully. It's why they chose to live in Knowles, with its handicap accessible bathroom, shower stalls and elevator.

Knowles Hall also has eight rooms that are fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, a law that protects individuals with disabilities from discrimination, mandating equal access to employment and services. But Eurick said they think the University still hasn't met that standard, including access outside of campus buildings.

"[There are] lots of huge cracks in the sidewalk, broken handicap buttons, extremely heavy doors and randomly closed sidewalks," Eurick said.

Jessica Weltman, director of institutional compliance at the University, tries to make sure UM follows the rules and regulations of the act. Weltman works alongside campus architect Jameel Chaudhry to communicate student needs through planning meetings they hold with University officials.

Chaudhry said the University is very thoroughly audited to make sure it is compliant and is confident in the accessibility of campus compared to some of the University's competitors.

Auditors go through prime routes to elevators, bathrooms and other widely used facilities to make sure UM is meeting accessibility standards. As changes are made, the University has to document the changes with photographs.

According to Chaudhry, updating buildings to meet disability act standards has been a priority, but both Weltman and Chaudhry find it difficult to stay up to date on compliance because of funding going elsewhere — the recent construction of the Lodge Dining Center, for example, cost around \$50 million — and the rules and regulations in the Americans with Disabilities Act are always being updated.

Chaudhry said the instructional compliance and architectural teams are doing what they can with the resources provided by the University.

"Whatever I can do, I will do," Chaudhry said.

According to Chaudhry, the University is starting a \$2.4 million update to meet regulations and an additional \$2.4 million



The University of Montana clears room for a new residence hall on Sept. 13, digging up what was formerly parking lot H.

for updating elevators.

UM spokesperson Dave Kuntz said making older buildings compliant could cost up to \$40 million. Kuntz also said there's no specific way to know how many buildings on campus are completely compliant since building accessibility is determined by factors such as purpose, age and services.

"Doing this work would require us to significantly increase tuition and fees on students to pay for the renovations," Kuntz said. "That is why we are taking a longer approach and securing that funding via the legislature or bond issuance to address disability act issues in our older buildings."

While tuition was raised this year, Kuntz said the University tries to opt for state funding to avoid further increases, which can mean longer waits for building upgrades.

To get grants from the Montana state Legislature, UM submits a plan and budget every two years with the next submission expected in January. All grants from the legislature must go toward academic projects. This includes all projects that improve classrooms and learning facilities. Disability act compliance also falls under this category.

According to Kuntz, the University also has the option to take out bonds for projects on campus that are not for academic purposes. This includes the Lodge and other similar projects including a new \$100

to \$110 million residence hall UM broke ground on in August.

The third and final way the University gains funding is from donors, like with the Montana Museum of Arts and Culture's \$15 million construction.

One of these state-funded projects is an update to the Charles H. Clapp research facility, including improving insulation and the elevator along with other outdated mechanics. The project will cost close to \$37 million and will begin next year.

Although there are students who look forward to seeing updates to the Clapp building, students like Eurick are still worried by the fact that it could be years until many buildings are equally accessible by all students.

And they aren't alone. Across the country, students and staff have started to sue universities for lack of accessibility.

As of 2018, 50 universities were sued over website accessibility by a man with a vision impairment. In 2019, the University of Montana received a complaint about wheelchair accessibility in the Dahlberg Arena following a graduation ceremony.

The University renovated the arena after facing a lawsuit from an investigation by the United States Attorney's office following the complaint.

UM was required to increase wheelchair space and to reconfigure the seating to make it more accessible. Compliant seating

will be accessible before the 2024-2025 basketball season kicks off.

According to Weltman, there are resources that students and staff can use to stay updated on accessibility issues and delays, like Access Updates. The Access Updates subscription is free and allows students and staff to get notifications for when there are elevator outages or other physical barriers on campus.

Weltman said students and staff are also welcome to fill out a barrier report online, which notifies staff of any issues, and allows them to update others.

Another reason why remodels have been slowed down is the asbestos that still resides in many buildings. According to Chuck Emmett, the now-retired safety and environmental consultant at the University, UM has a long-term plan to keep students and staff safe from asbestos exposure.

There is a database of building materials on campus that have been tested for asbestos. The database is referred to whenever a building is installing something new or has renovations planned for the near future. Before all future renovations, the asbestos database will be updated in order to keep students and staff safe.

According to previous Montana Kaimin reporting, the University dealt with an asbestos lawsuit in the past after failing to notify parents of children in the daycare in McGill Hall that their children may have been exposed to asbestos in 2019. The disturbance was identified in 2018. UM spent \$700,000 to renovate the space while the children enrolled in daycare were hosted elsewhere.

Meanwhile, back in Knowles Hall, Eurick was still walking up the four flights of stairs, measuring progress one methodical step at a time.

For staff and students who utilize the Americans with Disabilities Act, the online map of campus has pop ups for where you can find Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant entrances, elevators, narrative and snow removal priorities to help students and staff access the buildings.



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Rushing the Oval

WORDS BY ELLE DANIEL

PHOTOS BY JAMES MAXWELL BENTON & DIEGO HERNANDEZ

elle.daniel@umontana.edu

james.benton@umontana.edu

diego.hernandez@umontana.edu

Three sounds filled the air as the University of Montana Main Hall clocktower chimed: the frantic tearing open of envelopes, screams of joy and the pounding of shoes across the Oval as newly selected sorority members flocked to their sisters.

The big reveal followed three days of recruitment events at UM's three sororities; Alpha Phi, Delta Gamma and Kappa Alpha Theta. On bid day last Friday, the sororities gathered to welcome their new members.

The event was loud and proud. The sororities marched to the Oval, their chanting echoing down University Avenue. They carried huge hand-painted greek letters and dressed in distinct, colorful themes.

At the University Center, the newly selected members — 84 in total — received sealed envelopes holding their sorority invite.

Recruitment counselors, who guided new members through the recruitment process, while keeping their sorority affiliation secret, led the new members out to the Oval. They wore bathrobes to obscure their themed outfits.

Among the new members was 18-year-old freshman business finance major Keira Babbitt. She grew up in Missoula with sisters and now she “always [looks] for a strong, supportive group of women,” which led her to join a sorority.

The sororities chanted as the new members arrived. Recruits stood in a circle and watched the counselors drop their robes and join their sisters. Then it was time for the big reveal.

One minute to go. The clock tower chimed 6 p.m. and 84 sets of hands tore open their envelopes and read the name of their sorority.

In a hectic rush the girls raced to their new sorority sisters. They were greeted with cheers and hugs. One member from Kappa Alpha Theta gave a extra themed-jersey to a new recruit. Babbitt beamed amongst Alpha Phi. Her hands were shaking so badly she could hardly open her envelope.

“It was pure relief,” Babbitt said. “I was just so excited to run over to the group and be welcomed into the family.”

Then it was time for bid day after-parties at the houses. Two girls paused for a hug before they went. “Welcome home,” one said to the other. It's not clear who was the new member or the returning one. All that matters was that they both belonged.



TOP: Mariah Quiroz, an 18-year-old pre-med student from Tracy, California, shows spirit for Kappa Alpha Theta in the theme of “Theta for the win!” at bid day on Sept. 13.

DIEGO HERNANDEZ | MONTANA KAIMIN

BOTTOM RIGHT: Taylor Middaugh celebrates after becoming a member of Alpha Phi at the sorority rush event.

JAMES MAXWELL BENTON | MONTANA KAIMIN

BOTTOM LEFT: Delta Gamma poses under a rainbow with its new pledges.

JAMES MAXWELL BENTON | MONTANA KAIMIN

A student's guide to Missoula's music underground

KATE WIDMER

kate.widmer@umontana.edu

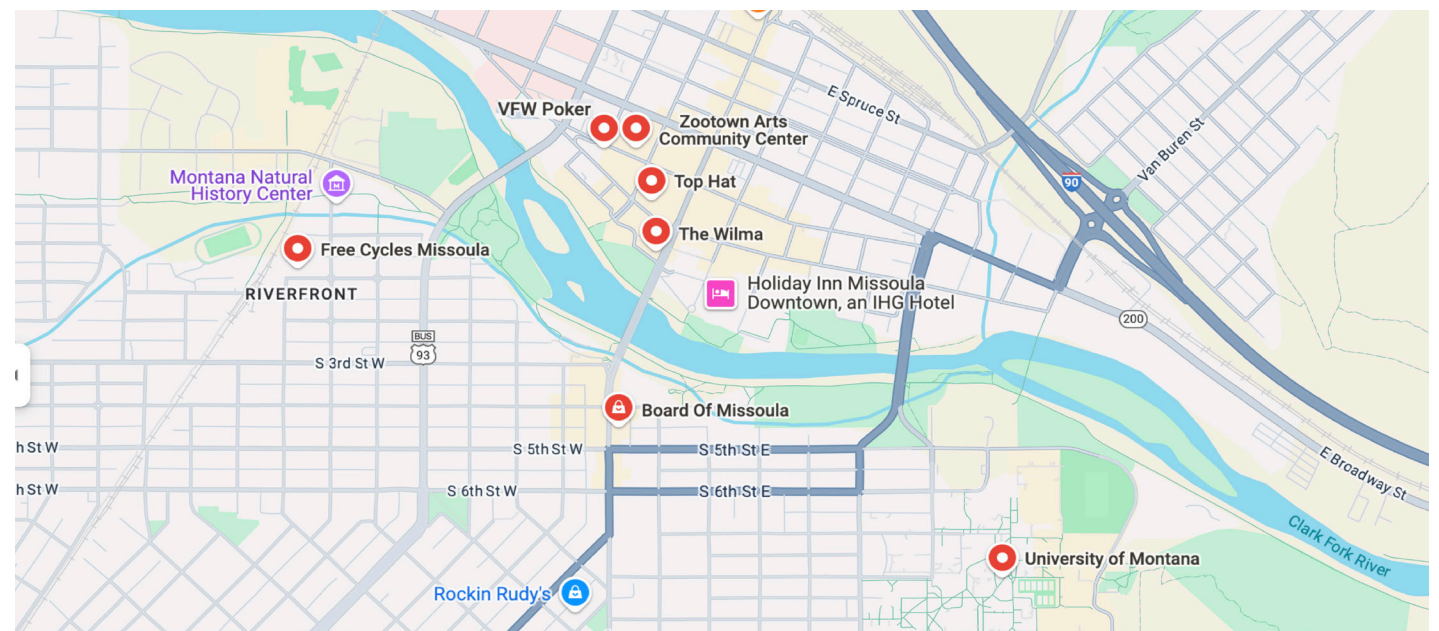
When people think of Missoula, their first thought probably isn't about the music. While it may not be New York, Chicago or Los Angeles, Missoula has been a unique longstanding haven for regional artists. As a University town, there's always something new and interesting being developed by local youth.

Although Missoula is starting to become more of a touring destination, with recent shows by Pearl Jam, Tyler Childers and P!nk, the local music scene still flies largely under the radar. Due to its smaller community and relative obscurity, music in Missoula is in constant evolution and made up of every genre you could think of, while being supported by people who genuinely care about seeing it thrive.

One of the biggest avenues for seeing local music is through the work of the Zootown Arts Community Center, a local nonprofit on Main Street. The organization runs several art classes for children and adults in various mediums, and hosts a visual art gallery featuring local artists of all ages with new exhibitions every month.

The arts community center is most frequented for its events in its Show Room — a small venue that's hosted by Jeff Rosenstock, Mount Eerie, Wednesday and Sweet Pill. In addition to live music, the Show Room also frequently hosts comedy, drag shows and the occasional touring theater production or art exhibition. The center is more expensive than other options for smaller shows in Missoula, usually around \$15 per ticket, but given that it's a nonprofit, you can be confident the money is being recycled into the greater artistic community. Plus, its shows cover any genre you could think of and are almost always for all ages.

Another lively venue is Free Cycles, a nonprofit by day that aims to help make sustainable transportation accessible through community support — that is to say, it'll give you a free bicycle and the knowledge and tools to maintain it in exchange for 90 minutes of volunteer work. By night, however, its shop space turns into one of the best places for live events in the area. It usually hosts bluegrass and/or country musicians, but on occasion, it'll throw rock, funk and



MACKENNA GLEAVE | MONTANA KAIMIN

electronic shows that bring in huge turn out, such as January's annual Winter Ball. Tickets are usually around \$10 and you can find the events calendar online.

Missoula's art community being on the smaller side does have one huge downside: finding venue space. The town used to have a thriving house show scene, but rent increases have forced various artists to find new living spaces outside of the area and options for community-based artistic gatherings are limited. As a result, there's no consistent punk venue, but there are consistent groups of people throwing punk shows. The main booking groups for shows in Missoula at the moment are Daisy Chain Productions and Dead Eye Production. They usually throw shows in the backroom at VFW 209, in downtown Missoula, just down the street from the Zootown Center, or sometimes the American Legion, 825 Ronan St., or, if weather allows, Mobash Skatepark, just on the other end of the Orange Street Bridge, heading out of downtown. Both booking groups focus on making shows financially accessible, keeping tickets around \$10, depending on the show. Daisy Chain tends to put on a variety of shows, whereas Dead Eye focuses more on punk/hardcore shows, so you always have options, no matter your taste.

There's also local music representation on campus. Grizzly Entertainment is a student group for students interested in the field of entertainment management that works directly with the College of Business' entertainment management program and other resources to get student's experience in the world of live entertainment. Switchback Records is the University of Montana's student-run record label. The club's goal is to help financially support local artists who are interested in releasing their music and making merch, as well as booking campus shows. Among its most notable concerts is the annual Weary Traveler's Music Festival, which is held on the Oval at the end of the spring semester. There's also Record Scratch Zine, a student club that publishes a monthly punk magazine about what's happening in the greater music scene, including a list of every do-it-yourself/punk show that's happening that month at time of print. If you're interested in spinning discs, there's also UM's radio station, KBGA, 89.9 FM, which broadcasts out of the Branch Center in the University Center. KBGA also hosts shows, but they're usually thrown at The Badlander in downtown Missoula, which means they're virtually inaccessible to underage students.

The good news about music in Missoula is that because of the size of the downtown area, most venues are within walking distance from campus, typically under 2 miles. For venues farther away, such as the American Legion, there's also the option of taking the Mountain Line, Missoula's free public bus system, whose schedule can be found via Apple Maps, Google Maps or the Transit app. Worst case scenario, there's always Uber, which usually costs about \$10–\$20.

The biggest strength of Missoula's music scene is the people who make it a community. There's always something new and interesting being created by people who genuinely love their craft, which means you'll never really be bored. Now that you're well-versed in Missoula's venues, get out there and explore the local scene!

More information:

showroom@zootownarts.org

freecycles.org/calender

[@daisychainpresents](#) on Instagram

[@deadeye productions](#) on Instagram

[@grizzlyentertainmentumt](#) on Instagram

[@switchbackrecords](#) on Instagram

Beetlejuice, Beetlejuice: Did Tim Burton give up?

GRACE SIMONICH

grace.simonich@umontana.edu

It's been 36 years since "Beetlejuice" first crashed onto the scene, but "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" feels like a ghost of its former self. While many fans, myself included, eagerly awaited the sequel, what we got instead was a CGI-heavy, cheesy mess that felt more like a reason to make someone mad than a reason to remember the charm and authenticity of the 1988 classic.

After waiting more than three decades, the hype was through the roof. But the movie fell

flat. Not only did it feel like it barely resembled the original, but the overhyped anticipation only heightened the film's flaws. We were promised a film experience! You know, to get us excited for the fall season! Instead, it feels like "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" tried to slap together too many ideas without giving us anything to talk about except how poorly it was executed.

Anyway, let's get the main question out of the way: Where was the plot? The movie feels like it threw seven different ideas at the wall, hoping the actors would save the show. The combination of the boy-ghost-in-the-attic idea

and the bland family drama felt fragmented and unconnected. Not only did these elements barely relate to each other, but they also failed to connect back to the original. Fans were left wondering: Is this even a sequel? Where were the relatable ghostly couple, Jenna Davis and Alec Baldwin's characters? That nostalgic magic just wasn't there — a critical element for a movie banking on its nostalgic audience of the kids who grew up with this film.

Instead of delivering a sequel that built on the original's quirky artsy charm, it felt like the filmmakers were stuck in the special effects department, throwing computer-generated images at the screen in hopes it would cover up the plot holes. But no amount of flashy effects could mask the fact that the film lacked the heart and authenticity of the original. 1988's "Beetlejuice" had this offbeat, do-it-yourself quality that made it so special, but "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" seemed content to drown us in predictable gags and cliché humor. Even Tim Burton's signature style, while visually present, felt like it had lost its soul. Delia Deetz's eerie artwork formed the disturbing qualities of the 1988 film, and for the sequel to redisplay an AI copy of the pieces into the scenes made it feel inauthentic.

As for the scares? Non-existent. The original had eerie moments that stuck with you, balancing the weird and creepy with

humor. Here, it seemed the filmmakers forgot "Beetlejuice" was supposed to be a little scary. Instead, it was more of a family-friendly comedy, and not in the fun, reminiscent way either. Every twist felt like it was telegraphed miles ahead, making the whole film feel predictable.

Then there's the big question. Did Tim Burton give up? Because it certainly felt like it. The film didn't seem to care about maintaining the spirit of the original or doing justice to its beloved characters. It was all over the place, with no clear direction, no memorably new characters, besides Jenna Ortega because she's the definition of Halloween, and absolutely none of the gothic magic that made the original movie a cult classic.

Ultimately, "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" is a film that tried to juggle too many ideas and failed to honor what made the 1988 version great. For fans who grew up with "Beetlejuice" and are hoping for a nostalgic dive into a quirky, haunted world, this sequel doesn't deliver.

If you're a true "Beetlejuice" fanatic, you'd likely agree. Fans remember that feeling when they first opened their imagination to "Beetlejuice." They will see this sequel for what it truly is: an overhyped shadow of the movie we adored.

Rating: 5/10



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WILLIAM WAN
FALL 2024 UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM POLLNER

Former Olympian coaches Griz pole vault

RILEY COMSTOCK

riley.comstock@umontana.edu

When Erica Fraley first started pole vaulting, her high school coach was worried she wouldn't be able to succeed. Fraley had lost one of her eyes when she was 4 months old and her coach worried it would hinder her.

Fraley started in cross country, but shifted to pole vaulting when it was allowed for high school girls in 1994. When she joined her freshmen year, female pole vaulting at the high school level had only been allowed in Oregon for two years. Fraley's coach had been looking for athletes to compete in the event because he didn't want to lose the opportunity to score more team points. Fraley wanted to try, but her coach had serious doubts.

She didn't let that stop her.

"I think I got stubborn when people said, 'You can't pole vault with one eye,'" Fraley said.

Fraley helped pioneer women's pole vaulting in Oregon. Despite not being a year-round track athlete, she won her state division.

Her early career as pole vaulter wasn't the center of her life though. She was also involved in a myriad of other organizations including 4-H and her school's forestry club, and was state president of Distributive Education Clubs of America in her senior year.

After graduating from Philomath High School in Philomath, Oregon, in 1998, she went to Texas A&M and competed in pole vault. Before this, she hadn't really considered her success. She thought of pole vaulting as just another one of her high school activities.

"Without coaches reaching out to me I would have never considered going to college to pole vault," Fraley said.

Even in college, she wasn't sure of her commitment to the sport. While she didn't doubt her passion, she found her time was stretched too thin with training taking up a large portion of her time.

"I was feeling that restriction of the athlete label," Fraley said. "I was feeling drawn away from athletics and wanted to go be a student who was driving in the direction of being a business student."

She quit the team after her sophomore year. But soon after, she realized her mistake.

"I started dreaming about pole vault, and then I started not sleeping cause I was thinking about pole vault," Fraley said.

Three weeks after she quit she went back to her coach who she described as level-head-

ed. He understood the thought she had put into the decision to leave and come back, Fraley said.

That return was a turning point in her pole vaulting career. She went from going through the motions of training like she was prior to quitting to really caring and focusing on what she was doing while training.

During her time at Texas A&M, she won two Big 12 Conference titles, but she also grew her love for the sport. After graduating with her degree in marketing, she decided to stick with the sport.

She spent the next several years training in Texas, but couldn't find the right environment for her development.

"Just because it's a great environment for other people doesn't mean it's right for you," Fraley said.

To find her crowd, she decided to move her training to Louisiana, where she lived from 2005 to 2008. Training to be a world-class athlete was difficult. Fraley struggled to fund and support her training. On top of working 40 hours for a real estate agent and managing a health club, she trained 20 hours a week.

In 2004, she made the Olympic trials, and in 2008 she made the United States Olympic team. While she didn't medal in the Olympics, she achieved her goal of making the team.

"There was a moment where I looked around and consciously thought, 'There's no big difference between me and everybody else out there. I'm part of this,'" Fraley said.

She did not stop there. After the Olympics, she had four more competitions in 2008. At the end of that season, after events in Brussels, Belgium and Shanghai, China, she sat down and contemplated.

"Before I'd start training again I would sit down and ask myself, 'Do I want to commit another year of my life to this?'" Fraley said.

She ended up committing to another year, but in January of 2009, she suffered an injury and never fully recovered. So she shifted her focus to continue her passion in the pole vaulting world by helping others.

Fraley quickly developed a pole vault training facility in Louisiana called the Louisiana Pole Vault Compound, and began coaching right around the time she was injured. The idea for the facility had been in her head for four years and finally brought it together in the spring of 2009.

She managed the facility for 10 years, until she moved to Pullman, Washington, with her husband where and went back to school for a



Erica Fraley, assistant coach for the University of Montana Track and Field vertical jumpers, is a former Olympic pole vaulter in the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics. She has helped athletes break three school records in the men's and women's outdoor pole vault. **MARC ANTHONY MARTINEZ | MONTANA KAIMIN**

master's degree in sports management.

Her husband, Doug, had coached at Tulane University before the pair moved to Pullman. Both coached the Washington State University Track and Field team there.

They described wanting to coach in a place they would enjoy with each other. So in 2022, they came to Montana.

"It's been a life goal of ours to be able to coach together for the same program," Erica said.

In their first two years, the pair has found immense success in breaking records. Erica has seen three school records broken, including a 30 year record in high jump that UM athlete Erin Wilde broke in May 2024 with a jump of 5-feet-10.5 inches.

Additionally, Erica coached Shealyne McGee and Zane Johnson, who both broke Montana's women's and men's outdoor pole

vault records.

She also coached the men's pole vault team to 11th in the nation last year.

Erica has drawn her coaching success and style from her own experience as a collegiate and professional athlete.

"It's the combination of experience as a world class athlete and just the layering of years of experience in working with young people," Doug said.

But Erica's coaching mentality doesn't end when athletes step off the track.

"I think her athletes feel very comfortable being able to come to her with off the field problems," Doug said. "That trust that she builds with them off the field carries over to when she's actually coaching them."

But Erica is humble about her success.

"It's always easy to look good as a coach if you have the right athletes," she said.

Thompson tackles her senior year after a stand out junior season

SOPHIA WARD

sophia.ward@umontana.edu

Skyleigh Thompson has been playing soccer since around age three after watching her sister play and wanting to follow in her footsteps. In high school, Thompson played soccer, track and basketball, but soccer always stood out as her favorite.

Thompson, a 22-year-old from Kalispell, is a standout athlete on the Montana Griz soccer team, and has been since she joined in 2021.

In Thompson's sophomore year of high school, she really saw herself excelling in the sport, and now she needed to continue her soccer career.

But she also knew didn't want to be too far from her family.

"They are my biggest support system," Thompson said. "I just wouldn't be anywhere I am without them."

Family has always had a large influence on her life. She has six siblings, three biological and three step siblings. Her father, Jeff Thompson, was a former wrestler at the University of Minnesota. One of her brothers, Anders Thompson, is currently a wrestler at the University of Oklahoma and his twin brother, Gunnar Thompson, is wrestling at Loras College in Iowa. Her sister played soccer at the University of Providence in Great Falls and received her graduate degree at the University of Montana. Thompson's dad is currently a wrestling coach at Flathead High School and her mom teaches health and physical education there as well.

There were multiple soccer camps hosted in the Flathead Valley throughout middle and high school for Thompson and the former UM soccer coach, Mark Plakorus, would attend.

"That is kind of when I had my heart set on 'I'm going to play college for the Griz,'" Skyleigh said.

Playing for the Griz was a big goal for Skyleigh as she went through high school.

Skyleigh's talent on the field translates to the classroom, where she majors in finance. She earned the Big Sky Conference's honors for the past three years. She also received first-team All-Big Sky Conference and was voted the team's offensive most valuable player. Last season, she received a Scholar All-American award as well.

"It was something I never thought I would be able to achieve," Skyleigh said. "That's solely just because of the people that I'm surrounded with here on a day to day basis."

Going into freshmen year at UM on the soccer team, her goal was to be an impact player and try to become a starter. Halfway through her first season, a position as forward opened up and she got her initial opportunity to start.



Skyleigh Thompson chases the ball held by Idaho State forward Saydree Bell on Oct. 8, 2023. The Griz won with a final score of 1-0.

CHRIS LODMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN

As she progressed as a player and gained more experience, she has changed her mindset slightly.

In her first game, she was a little intimidated, but one of her older teammates got her to take a deep breath and told her that she got it. Skyleigh now sees being on the field with her teammates as one of the biggest blessings next to her family.

Skyleigh said she struggled with being confident as a player in her first two seasons. Last season, she focused on her strengths and leaned into it.

"From there my confidence just skyrocketed," Skyleigh said. "That makes such a huge difference for me."

Last year, Montana set the standards high by making it to the Big Sky Conference Tournament, but fell short of the NCAA Tournament. This year, the team is taking it day by day and trying to focus new energy on the goal of getting further than it did last year.

"[The team is] not letting the outside pressure get to us, but inviting it," Skyleigh said.

With this being her final season, she wants to enjoy it and have fun.

"I think I play my best soccer when those coincide with one another," Skyleigh said.

She is trying to take in every moment with the team and coaching staff. Head coach Chris Citowicki said he loves having Skyleigh on the team. He said everything about Skyleigh came together her junior year at UM. Skyleigh's freak athleticism and ability to score goals and create chances is unmatched he said, and as a person she brings her personality to the team.

"She just brings who Sky is," Citowicki said. "She is a unique individual, there aren't many

Skys out there."

Citowicki said he's looking forward to being around her and the senior class in their last season as Grizzlies. This year's senior class is the first he recruited and used to create the standard of what Griz soccer is.

"She's a true Montanan and I'm so proud to have someone from the state be the face of the program," Citowicki said. "It's beautiful and everything you'd possibly want as a coach."



Fall Hours

Monday/Wednesday 10:30 - 3:00

Tuesday/Thursday 5:00 - 7:00

Saturday 11:00 - 3:00

Register



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