

MONTANA KAIMIN

ECHOES OF DECLIN

A student died in November.
As his would-be graduation date approaches,
his family, friends and fraternity remember him
in their own ways. Story by Christine Compton



6 Tuition troubles

Cover photo by Eric Ermer

13 Catching up with Zephyr

14 Paying for space

May 4, 2023 | Volume 125 | Issue No. 29



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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Email me at pamela@montanaesl.com to set up a 20-minute free intake call.
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Hundreds protest Zephyr's censure



Protesters march on Higgins Avenue heading downtown on April 28. The Pride and Determination march drew around 1,000 protesters bringing with them signs and yelling out chants. It was organized by 50 people after state Rep. Zooley Zephyr was barred from the House floor on April 26. **LUKAS PRINOS | MONTANA KAIMIN**

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

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

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Edited by Margie E. Burke

HOW TO SOLVE:

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

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

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

WORK OUTSIDE THIS SUMMER!

BE AN INSTRUCTOR FOR MISSOULA OUTDOOR LEARNING ADVENTURES!



MOLA INSTRUCTORS WILL TAKE KIDS AGES 6-14 TO HIKE, BIKE, RAFT, CLIMB, CANOE, KAYAK, AND SWIM EACH DAY IN A DAY CAMP-STYLE PROGRAM!

LEARN MORE
HERE



Thank you, reader

Looking across the Oval this lovely spring day, one could easily forget the months of late nights, last minute essays and grueling group projects.

It's almost a shock to me that many of the students here even have time outside of class to read the Kaimin. And yet, we see you, and appreciate all you do to help your local, independent, student-run newspaper.

The Kaimin does not function without the students. They are the ones who write our stories, take our photos and design our graphics. We are in even more debt to our audience, who tell us the important stories, help us hold UM accountable and ultimately let us know what to do better.

In my four years at the Kaimin, I have seen the dark grip of the COVID-19 pandemic take the Mountain Campus. I have seen the rise of a new generation protesting the status quo. And I have seen a campus revival that might be decades in the making.

This year, it's clear you are listening. You wanted to hear about UM's hesitancy to build a new dining garden. You heard about the University's changing scholarship systems. And you listened to the tragic stories of UM student deaths, each with their own important story.

Whether good or bad, we write the stories for you, reader, and we appreciate your support. After ASUM's election last week, we know that more than 600 of you want more student news on this campus. Thank you for supporting the Kaimin fee increase.

Through my nearly 120 issues of the Kaimin, I have learned that the most important stories come directly from the hearts of students. Whether the cost of living increases, or an academic restructuring, the Kaimin will be here to tell your story, just like it has for 125 years.

It has been an honor to serve you.

-Griffen Smith, Editor-in-Chief

Meet the 2023-24 Kaimin Editor

I came to Missoula three years ago after graduating high school and spending the summer delivering pizzas in an N95 mask. My family drove up to Missoula to help me move into Knowles Hall. None of us were sure how far I'd make it into my freshman year before a COVID-19 outbreak would inevitably shut the world down again.

The first people who greeted me when I arrived on campus? Montana Kaimin reporters. They captured my uncertainty for the future, and the first issue that ran when I became a UM student featured me on the cover carrying my cello on my back into my new home.

The Kaimin made me feel seen, and my goal from then on was doing the same for my peers. Since then, I've worked as a news reporter and news editor, and I couldn't be more grateful to lead the passionate group of students here at the Kaimin next year.

I've spent my time at the Kaimin reporting the news that affects everyone living and working on this campus, and our team will continue keeping our readers updated with important stories. Our team is united to highlight students' struggles and triumphs, and we strive to include all voices in our coverage.

UM has truly come to life since I moved here in 2020, but those memories of harnessing connection in spite of the distance will never leave me. We're a resilient bunch here in Missoula, and I'm overjoyed to continue sharing stories of fellow students bringing energy to everything they do here at the University.

I can't wait to get to work next semester.

— Emily Tschetter,
incoming Editor-in-Chief



ZORG & BEBOP: SE 1 EP 13



WALTER MEDCRAFT | MONTANA KAIMIN

ACLU sues for Zephyr; Gianforte to broaden TikTok ban; Bell-Vanderkar win ASUM election

ACLU SUES TO REINSTATE ZEPHYR

The American Civil Liberties Union of Montana filed a lawsuit in Helena on Monday challenging the censorship of Montana House Rep. Zooey Zephyr after she was ousted from the House floor last week. Zephyr, a Democrat, was first silenced on the floor after telling Republican lawmakers there would be “blood on their hands” if they passed Senate Bill 99, which would ban gender affirming care for minors. Gov. Greg Gianforte signed the bill into law last week. The case argues the censoring, in response to a protest on April 24 that led to seven arrests, violates Zephyr’s First Amendment rights and the rights of her 11,000 constituents in central Missoula. Zephyr can continue to vote on bills, but cannot access or speak on the House floor. Zephyr, one of Montana’s transgender lawmakers, has become a nationally known face regarding the extreme political divide in several state houses across the country. She has appeared in dozens of national media outlets and drew more than 1,000 people to a rally in Missoula last week. (Griffen Smith)

MONTANA ABORTION CLINICS SUE OVER NEW RULE LIMITING MEDICAID COVERAGE

The three in-person abortion providers in Montana sued the state health department on Friday to block its new restrictions on how the state’s Medicaid program can pay for abortions. A Lewis and Clark County District Court judge granted a temporary restraining order on the bill May 1, and a hearing on the lawsuit is scheduled for May 12. The rule would only allow Medicaid to reimburse abortions provided by physicians, not physician assistants or registered nurses. All abortion reimbursements through Medicaid would have to be pre-authorized, instead of the current system where people can get coverage after their procedures if the provider attests to it being medically necessary or an emergency. The lawsuit, filed by Planned Parenthood of Montana, All Families Healthcare and Blue Mountain Clinic, argues that the new rule would disproportionately affect low-income Montanans, and that it would force patients who seek medication abortions via telehealth to get in-person examinations. “Unless this rule is blocked, health inequity in the state will dramatically increase as patients are forced to travel even further afield to access the health care they need, if they can at all,” a joint statement

from the clinics read. The state’s health department director Charlie Brereton, who was named as a defendant, said the state “looks forward” to defending the rule in court. (Emily Tschetter)

GOV. GIANFORTE SUGGESTS BROADENING TIKTOK BAN BEFORE SIGNING

Now that the state Legislature signed off on a TikTok ban on April 14, Gov. Greg Gianforte is pushing for expanding the terms of the ban. Gianforte is asking the bill’s supporters to apply the ban to all platforms that may share personal data with nations that are considered to be “foreign adversaries.” The Montana Free Press found through a public records request that Gianforte’s attorney Anita Milanovich wrote in an email that the governor is still “prepared to sign the bill as is.” “He believes this language would improve the bill by broadening its privacy protections against all foreign adversaries, not just TikTok. It also addresses technical and legal concerns with the bill,” Milanovich stated in the email obtained by MTFP.

Rep. Katie Sullivan, D-Missoula, proposed almost the exact same amendment while the bill was moving through the House, but it narrowly failed when the bill’s supporters pushed back on it. Legislative attorney Todd Everts said last week that Gianforte already sent over the text for an amendatory veto for the bill, which allows him to suggest changes without completely killing the bill. The proposed text would remove any specific mentions of “TikTok” and “China” in order to broaden the ban. (ET)

ASUM ELECTION RESULTS: BELL, VANDERKAR WIN EXECUTIVE SEATS; BALIUS NEW BUSINESS MANAGER

In the student government’s first election using ranked choice voting, about 13.5% of students cast their ballots and Maggie Bell and Noah Vanderkar prevailed as the newly-elected Associated Students of the University of Montana president and vice president. “It is so relieving to finally be able to institute necessary change and bring so many new things to campus and student life,” Vanderkar said. “There is a ton of work to get done but Maggie and I are ready and cannot wait to get our hands dirty.” Bell and Vanderkar, who ran on prioritizing student equity initiatives and connecting campus with the broader Missoula community, received 473 first choice votes, or 42.3%. Hunter Bighorn and Noah Gipson received 337 first choice votes, and the Joselyn Jolly and O’Shay Birdinground ticket got 276 votes. Since Jolly and Birdinground had the least first choice votes, their supporters’ second choices were reallocated to the other two candidate teams. Bell and Vanderkar then had 585 votes in their favor compared to Bighorn and Gipson’s 434, meaning Bell and Vanderkar won with 59.1% of the final vote total. Wyatt Balius was elected as the new business manager with 573 votes, or 58.6%. He said he was thankful for opposing candidate Carter Jasper for mounting a fun and informative campaign. The 16 candidates who registered for the senate race were elected, with Buddy Wilson receiving the most support with 474 votes. Four write-in candidates were also elected, and all received fewer than 15 votes. (ET)

POLICE BLOTTER

CHLOE OLSGAARD
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Apparently bitches be bonkers this time of year, because the University of Montana Police Department responded to 11 crimes between April 21 and April 28. During this shit show of a week, officers dealt with perverts running rampant and some good ol’ meth madness.

FRIDAY 4/21: TERRIBLE TEXTER

At 2:30 p.m., UMPD received a Title IX report from a student who said he’s been stalked since the end of March. He said a female student had been harassing him through texts. Police Chief Brad Giffin said this was considered stalking as it caused him emotional and/or physical distress. The case is closed and being handled by the Student Advocacy Resource Center and Title IX.

FRIDAY 4/21: DOMESTIC DISPUTE

An anonymous caller reported a domestic violence dispute that happened at the Food Zoo a few days earlier. The caller said they witnessed a man yelling at a woman, until things escalated when the man threw a cup, with water inside of it, at the woman. Officers identified that both of them are students, after which they closed the case and referred it to SARC.

TUESDAY 4/25: RUN, PERV, RUN!

A woman called UMPD at 11:00 p.m. after seeing a “suspicious” man looking into car windows at the Lewis and Clark Villages. Three officers arrived on scene and saw the suspect the caller described. When they approached him, he took off running faster than a goddamn grizzly bear. Security video footage identified the suspect, and officers determined that he is a known sexual offender. The case was closed and referred to his parole officer. UMPD plans to ban him from campus.

THURSDAY 4/27: STADIUM SLEEPER

While an officer was pulling out of the UMPD building, he observed someone who appeared to be unconscious on the east stairs at the Washington-Grizzly Stadium. When the officer approached the suspect, he was awake, but appeared to be under the influence of... something. After the officer ran his name in the database, it revealed that he had several warrants out for his arrest for drug charges. When UMPD made the arrest, officers found meth on him. UMPD sent in samples of the drugs he had on his person to be tested.

The Weekly Crossword													by Margie E. Burke			
1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13		
14						15					16					
17						18				19						
20						21				22						
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51	52	53					54						55	56		
57						58				59						
60					61					62						
63					64					65						

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ACROSS

- 1 Harbor sights
6 Give a hand?
10 Large-scale
14 ___ noir (wine)
15 Tiny bit
16 Prefix with physics
17 Sister to Fred Astaire
18 Legal tender, slangily
20 Ancient drug for grief
22 Abhor
23 Implied
24 Reputation stain
25 Magical drink
27 Given to bragging
31 Stage background
32 Biblical outcast
34 Wed stealthily
35 Minestrone, for one
37 Less damp
39 "Monday Night Football" network
40 Actress MacDowell
42 Hypnotized
44 Olympic score
45 Soft to the touch
47 Stalky veggie
49 Trait carrier
50 Stun gun
51 Burglar deterrents
54 Locker room speeches
57 Mythical sea serpent
59 Think out loud
60 Sink alternative
61 Money in Milan

- 62 Extend, as a contract
63 Chances
64 Bartlett fruit
65 Finishes the lawn

DOWN

- 1 Spic-and-____
2 Trapper's ware
3 Lack of knack
4 Medieval weapon
5 Sign-making aid
6 Tour highlight
7 Folk wisdom
8 Ingested
9 Spanish rice dish
10 Prepare for combat
11 Kind of moss
12 Allergy symptom
13 Birthday fare
19 Hangman's loop
21 Out of gas
24 Yawning, perhaps
25 Blue-book filler
26 "Madam Secre-tary" actress
27 Life form
28 One taken in, once
29 Shoe part
30 Squiggly's pal
33 Cut back
36 Religious travelers
38 Summary
41 Fluid accumulation
43 Make like new
46 Part of the foot
48 Cleared a hurdle
50 Barbershop quartet singer
51 In addition
52 Lascivious
53 Enthusiastic
54 Normal beginning?
55 Kind of socks
56 Wields a needle
58 Old TV knob

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

Summer job o-scope

MARIAH THOMAS

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The semester’s done. You’ve either graduated (you never have to worry about finals again!) or you’re on summer break. But, as Phineas and Ferb said, “The annual problem of our generation is finding a good way to spend it.” Are you going to build a rocket? Fight a mummy? Mow a bunch of lawns? Regardless of what you’re doing, we all know the ultimate goal is to make some cash. That’s right — this is the summer job horoscope. Which job will you choose? Your answers can be found in the stars. **TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20):** Your ass needs to be grounded and in nature — so you decided to literally ground yourself in nature. Your summer job? A yoga instructor at some commune where they’re paying you your body weight in tofu to do downward dog for the next three months. Hopefully, you come back to campus chilled out. We all know you needed it after finals week.

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20): You’re a social butterfly, Gem, which means you’re totally in your element as a server for the summer. You make great tips, but more importantly, you’re the first to know about ALL the hot gossip. Which line cook is hooking up with which server is a secret only you have the intel on. **CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22):** You put your caring nature to good use as a nanny for the summer. Those little ones you’re watching might run you ragged between the trampoline park, the real park and the public library, but by the end of the summer, your sweet lil heart doesn’t want to leave them to go back to school. So fair, honestly. Maybe switch your major to elementary ed? **LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22):** You’re all about the spotlight, Leo, and that summer gotta look bright on Insta. That’s why you’re busy getting your tan on at the local pool. That’s right — your summer gig is lifeguarding. It’s good for the aesthetic, the cuties at the pool get to check out your tanned bod and bare ass all summer AND if you’re really lucky, you’re sure to be at the center of at least one love triangle between your coworkers. We just hope it’s not TOO much like “Love Island.” **VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 22):** A girlboss through and through, you knew your summer plans months in advance. They involve a desk, a fancy-ass office and a high-profile person knowing who you are. You’re interning at the U.S. Senate. Baucus Leaders’ program, anyone? Don’t forget about the rest of us while you’re thriving in D.C. working for Schumer or Daines or Tester or whoever. A slay. **LIBRA (SEP. 23-OCT. 22):** You’re the chaos, Libra, and your summer job 100% matches that energy. Through a friend



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

of a friend of a friend, you got an in at a sweet rafting company, and you’re leading people through the Colorado River or some shit. Nobody even knew you had those skills, but you’re a total natural. You’ll be back there every summer. A win tbh. **SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21):** Somehow you landed an internship you knew nothing about doing some excavations with a world-renowned archaeologist. You’re traveling the world and going on exotic adventures and you might’ve even solved a mystery or two, but it’s all so secret you can’t tell anyone. Just try your hardest to learn from the storyline of “Jurassic Park,” and maybe *don’t* let your boss bring anything back to life?

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21): Unlike everyone else, you’re not filling those long summer days with a job. Instead, you decided to hike the Pacific Crest Trail, or at least part of it. You might be broke at the end of the summer, but that’s okay because the memories of those sick views while shitting in the woods will last forever. One pro tip from us to you: Don’t forget your bear spray. **CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19):** Cue Donna Summer’s “She Works Hard for the Money,” ‘cause Capricorn, you’re working three jobs this summer. You’re pulling morning shifts at a coffee shop, evenings at a restaurant and something mysterious on the side

(Part of the mob? Donating plasma? Selling Goodwill finds on eBay for way more than they’re worth?). Whatever it is, we don’t judge.

AQUARIUS (JAN 20-FEB. 18): An artistic queen, you stick as close to Missoula’s art scene as you can get. That’s why you sought out a gig working security for Logjam this summer. You might have to deal with some hipster Missoulians who get too drunk off their IPAs, but more often than not, you have the time of your life listening to the sick bands playing Kettlehouse this summer. Death Cab for Cutie anyone?

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20): Your sentimental ass heads home every summer instead of staying in Missoula. You LIVE for working summers at that local bookstore that gave a younger, nerdier version of you your very first job. You know your bosses and spend your evenings reading semi-erotic “fantasy” books in the back. You truly are living the life. **ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19):** Cue the wide-brimmed hat, megaphone and a horribly bright t-shirt... Aries, you’re a camp counselor through and through. Your hyper-competitive spirit comes out big time in the camp competitions. You absolutely DESTROY all those 12 year olds at tug-of-war.

UM plans tuition, fee increase

CLAIRE BERNARD
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The University of Montana plans to raise the cost of tuition and fees over the next two years. With rising living costs and inflation in Missoula, the University’s concerns about funding are growing, and so are students’ concerns about paying their registration bills.

According to a presentation at the student government by Paul Lasiter, vice president of finance and operations, tuition will increase by varying rates for the next fiscal year, pending approval by the Board of Regents.

Rates of increase depend on student status, whether they’re from in-state, if they are a part of the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) and if they’re undergraduates or graduates. Tuition rates will be increased by 5% at the lowest end and up to 6% at the highest. Fee increases will rise by at least 12.2% in fall 2023 and 9% in fall 2024.

According to UM spokesperson Dave Kuntz, the cost of operating UM’s campus has risen dramatically over the past few years.

“To keep the things that make UM special, we have to make tuition and fee increases to keep up with those costs,” Kuntz said.

Out-of-state students and graduate students are bearing the brunt of the increases. The financial team’s goal is to balance out who pays what to the University, and the increases should strike that balance.

“The growing cost of living in Montana is something that we fully understand and take into consideration,” Kuntz said. “That’s why the tuition changes will be relatively modest, compared to the growing costs of operating campus.”

Money made from the tuition raises will go to funding faculty and basic campus services. Money from fee increases will go to more specific departments like IT and infrastructure workers, which UM has been taking bonds out to fund.

UM is also looking at other avenues to raise funding. Kuntz said the University hopes tuition increases will pay back the millions in bonds it has taken out for its construction projects. UM also gets funding from Montana’s Legislature and private philanthropy sources.

The cost of living is on the rise, however.

According to the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, the cost of a house in Missoula has increased by 61% since 2020.

With such high living costs, employees need higher salaries, campus needs new updates and UM doesn’t have enough ways to bring in that revenue.

“What a shift in tuition provides [for] the University is a larger base that UM can use to aid basic services,” Kuntz said.

Another source of need for more funding came from the newly passed House Bill 13, which requires state employee wages to increase by 8% by July 2024. Kuntz said the two aren’t directly related, but UM needs to reach those staff salaries since they are important for maintaining quality educators and employees at UM.

Not all students at UM are thrilled about this change. Trystan Harmon, a junior from Twin Bridges, Montana, said the costs of a college education are already too high. Paying even more money, in his mind, should have a direct impact on raising the quality of education.

“Student debt freaks me out,” the 21-year-old said. “I don’t know how people even go to school knowing they have that much debt behind them. Because then you have to get a job right away or work during school and have to start paying it off or it’ll just keep building up.”

Harmon, a geosciences major, came to UM last year from Montana Tech in Butte. Harmon said he’s watched his girlfriend and other friends drop out of UM because of the pressure of student debt, so he is grateful for his own scholarships and grants that help him out as a low-income student. He still feels anxious about the cost of college constantly.

“Every single day I wake up and think, ‘If I don’t have good grades I’m faced with this giant bill,’” Harmon said.

And although he understands why UM needs to make money, Harmon said he also wants UM to clearly explain where the fees and costs are going. Some areas of campus that are well-funded, he said, could be redistributed more.

“They could put some of the revenue they get from the sports program into the education programs,” Harmon said. “I know they get a lot of money but looking around campus I don’t see any of it.”

Sophomore Lydia Plamp from Canton, Georgia, feels similarly to Harmon. The sociology and religious studies major said she

feels her professors don’t always seem to care about what they are teaching enough to justify raising the cost of going to UM.

“They just care about the grades so they look good,” the 20-year-old said. “They teach in a way that doesn’t make sense to anyone who doesn’t have a master’s degree.”

She called the increase in fees and tuition “bullshit,” and said she already pays too much coming from out-of-state. She said there’s already too much going on at the University that isn’t directly focused on improving education for students.

“Am I going to pay for them to do things other than focus on the students?” Plamp asked. “I guess so.”

Since she’s moving off campus next year, Plamp said she’s nervous about being able to afford it all. And although Plamp said she understands why UM needs more funding, she thinks the funding is misdirected. Like Harmon, Plamp said athletes get too much money.

“They don’t do well enough to justify the amount of money they get,” Plamp said.

UM’s athletics facilities, like the new indoor practice stadium, are mostly driven by independent ticket sales and private donors. While UM does allocate some funding to athletics, many of the athletics projects on campus and student athlete scholarships are privately funded.

Cost of tuition and fees right now

Resident undergraduate:

\$3,859

Resident graduate:

\$4,546

WUE:

\$5,373

Nonresident undergraduate:

\$14,817

Nonresident graduate:

\$16,557

However, Kuntz emphasized that although the percentage increases seem high, students will only see a minor increase in cost.

“While we are seeking an increase in tuition from the board, it will likely be only a slight adjustment to the student’s bill because of the University’s commitment to tearing down financial barriers to providing education,” Kuntz said.

Additionally, Kuntz emphasized that the cost of tuition at UM is still much lower compared to surrounding states. However, looking at different school websites, that doesn’t appear to be the case. The estimated cost of attendance (COA) for a year at Idaho State University costs around \$23,258. At the University of South Dakota, in-state COA is around \$19,288 a year. According to UM’s website, a year of school costs around \$25,534.

Kuntz also said UM plans to continue to offer aid for lower-income students that these increases will directly affect through waivers, grants, and scholarships. For example, the Grizzly Promise Initiative will continue, which waives tuition for low-income students from Montana.

“We acknowledge that life is getting more expensive and we take that into consideration,” Kuntz said. “But we want to make sure that UM still provides a quality education to its students.”

Cost of tuition and fees in Fall 2023

Resident undergraduate:

\$4,384

Resident graduate:

\$5,212

WUE:

\$6,186

Nonresident undergraduate:

\$16,890

Nonresident graduate:

\$18,858

UM admission director resigns, citing personal reasons

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John Massena, the University of Montana’s admissions director, resigned after working for UM for two years. Massena is leaving the role to tend to a family member’s medical issues.

“There’s times in one’s professional life where family and the needs of family are going to take precedent over a career,” Massena said. “And that’s just happening to me right now. And it’s unfortunate, because I really love it here.”

He will be joining Webster University in St. Louis, Missouri, as its new associate vice president of enrollment. He insisted the new job was not part of his decision to leave UM. It just serves as a new job in his field that he can do closer to his family.

“It’s strictly for personal reasons. I didn’t leave a chance for management to negoti-

ate a higher salary with me because that would be unfair. I’m not looking for that,” Massena said.

His last day in office will be the last day of the semester, May 12. Vice President for Enrollment Management and Strategic Initiatives Mary Kreta will be assuming the role of interim director following Massena’s departure.

“He has done a tremendous job of building an admissions team. And I really look forward to working more closely with them to bring in this year’s class and start the next recruitment cycle,” Kreta said.

Before joining UM, Massena worked as an enrollment consultant for the education consulting company Ruffalo Noel Levitz for five years. There, he worked with UM as a client.

According to UM spokesperson Dave Kuntz, Massena had a significant impact on the University over his two years in the role.

“The impact that John has had at the University over the past few years will be felt for a long time. And while he’s moving back closer to home, the infrastructure and the processes that he built with our admission system are here to remain,” Kuntz said.

Despite his departure, Massena is confident that UM’s strategies will allow the University to continue to thrive.

“UM is reaching out to markets better than before, which went down for the last few years because we weren’t doing a good job of getting [the University’s] message out into the world,” Massena said.

The next permanent director of admissions at UM will be selected through a search launching next month, which involves a lengthy process with two rounds of interviews. The University is uncertain of when a new director will be hired once the search launches. Kuntz said that the ideal candidate will understand the Uni-

versity’s mission and prioritize accessibility for all.

“This person serves as the front door to our University as we recruit the next generation of Grizzlies. And when the search process happens, all those things will be taken into consideration,” Kuntz said.

Massena predicts UM’s growth will continue in his absence, with increasing numbers for both freshman and transfer students.

“I think we will continue to grow this fall and next fall pretty aggressively, and then the growth will slow. So I think we’ll be back to numbers that it had in the mid-2000s over the next three to five years,” Massena said.



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A student died in November. As his would-be graduation date approaches, his family, friends and fraternity remember him in their own ways.

Story by Christine Compton

THE LAST TIME TREY JOHNSON and Declin Ermer spent time together was a Friday afternoon. It was a frigid October day, and Johnson got out of work earlier than usual. Ermer, who couldn't stand a lull in his day, picked Johnson up.

The two, both seniors, had a party to go to later, but it wasn't for a few hours. They drank some beers and listened to music while hitting a ball around the University of Montana Golf Course. Ermer may have been a gifted athlete, but golf was Johnson's game. They lost track of the score and just talked instead.

They went to the party later that evening. It was hosted at the house for the Beta Delta chapter of Sigma Chi, just a few blocks away from campus. As members of the fraternity, it was

only right that they made an appearance.

Ermer swept through the crowd, a popular man with lots of people to greet. Johnson was quieter. He socialized a little and decided to go home early with a friend.

Not 15 minutes later, he received a call.

Looking back on it, Johnson's glad he had those last few hours with Ermer. He didn't really want to get off work early, but the time he spent with his friend was nice. Peaceful.

Declin Floyd Ermer fell from a 20-foot balcony at the Sigma Chi fraternity house on Oct. 28, 2022. He was posing for a picture when he lost his balance, and slipped over the edge.

When he hit the ground, he suffered a traumatic brain injury, two skull fractures, a spinal T7 compression fracture and lung contusions. He was taken to the Intensive Care Unit at St. Patrick Hospital, where he remained in a coma.

At the trauma unit, medical professionals told his father that he had alcohol in his system. Johnson said while Ermer had been drinking, he was not out of control that night. On Nov. 5, doctors decided to fly him to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle.

The next day, the family was told he wouldn't survive. Ermer registered as an organ donor when he received his driver's license, so the hospital searched for matches. His family members took turns having one-on-one time with him in his final days, washing his hair, shaving his beard and pressing his inked handprint onto donated quilts.

His mother, Laura Townsend Ermer, chose the color pink. It reminded her of a pink suit her son loved to wear.

Ermer's "honor walk" was on Nov. 9, which is a final goodbye when hospital staff line the

hallway to pay respect to an organ donor. In the medical world, it's a moment of gratitude.

His mother, father, stepmother and his mother's partner walked beside him as the staff transported him from his room to a space next to the operating room. They listened to "Ocean Eyes" by Billie Eilish.

They spent their last moments with him until he died at 4:44 p.m. He was 22 years old.

His corneas and his kidneys went to four people across the country, one as young as 19 and another as old as 80. His liver will be used for research by the International Institute for the Advancement of Medicine, where

researchers are testing new drug therapies and developing medications to fight hepatitis C. He also gave his heart valves, veins, arteries and nerves. Gift of Hope, an organ and tissue donation network, estimates he saved or improved

the lives of at least seven people.

His mother documented the journey on Caring Bridge, a nonprofit website that allows people facing various medical conditions to update loved ones and friends. That Caring Bridge is still making posts, the last one from April 13, along with the Instagram account dedicated to his family and friends' memories of him called "Found Declin." The last post on that account was March 24.

In the weeks that followed, it was a blur of activity for Ermer's people. They organized celebrations of life in Missoula and in Wheaton, Illinois, where Ermer grew up. They designed and printed pink wristbands reading "Declin Strong," which became their mantra of hope and resilience, and hung them on Christmas trees. In January, Johnson and his roommates — Ermer's friends — started their last semester at UM.

Now, graduation is around the corner. Ermer would have finished his degree in health and human performance, the first step in his plan to become a physical therapist.

He won't get to walk with his classmates



LEFT: Declin Ermer stands with his grandfather, Floyd Ermer. Eric Ermer, Declin's father, said the two had a lot in common: Quick to befriend strangers, and always working. **CONTRIBUTED | ERIC ERMER**

ABOVE: Founded in 1906, the Beta Delta Chapter Sigma Chi Fraternity house is the second oldest fraternity chapter at the University of Montana. Declin Ermer lived there for a year before finding his own place. He fell from one of its balconies in October 2022. **ANDY MEPHAM | MONTANA KAIMIN**

across the stage at the Adams Center. In honor of his memory and his accomplishments, loved ones from his life will celebrate and remember him how they can — through scholarships, honorary degrees, dedications and quiet reflections.

GOOFY FOR LIFE

Nadia Ermer said her brother was goofy from the very beginning.

Declin had three biological sisters: Chelsi, Hannah and Nadia. His parents, Eric Ermer and Laura Townsend Ermer, divorced when he was in the first grade. Their respective partners, Hayley McCauley Ermer and Frank Liberio, had their own children: Zach on Eric's side, and Matt and Chris on Laura's.

As the youngest of all of them, Nadia wonders if Declin was destined to be goofy.

Eric and Laura lived in the same town, so he and his biological siblings grew up in both households. With so many family members, it may have been easy to slip into the background, but Nadia said Declin wasn't the type to be looked over.

"He knew he was the baby," Nadia said. "He loves being in the spotlight, making people laugh and happy."

Nadia and Declin were especially close. When he was in early elementary school, he had a hard time speaking clearly, communicating mostly in "gibberish," she said.

Nadia, always at his side, was his dutiful translator. Speech therapy helped him with his words, but Nadia claimed to still read his mind.

While crammed next to each other in their dad's Suburban on road trips, Nadia said they'd always find games to play, sometimes giggling so much that Eric would bellow, "Stop having fun! You're driving me crazy!"

Always one to go along with his sisters' fun, there were plenty of days Declin played dress up with them. Coming home from the mall always involved a fashion show, and Declin was sure to strut and pose for his guffawing audience.

The bravado came naturally. In middle school, Declin got a Justin Bieber haircut and went as the celebrity for Halloween. He always had the gusto of the popular kid, Nadia said, even when it was "awkward-middle-school

popular."

He tolerated being crammed into dresses all the way into high school when Nadia convinced him to wear a Snow White costume during homecoming week.

He loved being the center of attention, always striving to get reactions out of people and put a smile on their faces, his sister remembers. It wasn't for his ego, Nadia thinks.

"He never knew how to accept an award," she said. "He hated getting gifts. I think he got that from our dad. It's not needed, or he feels like he needs to give one in return or something."

By high school, he was officially too cool for his sisters, Nadia said. He'd act a bit more macho, and Nadia remembers nearly every girl in his class crushing on him. She loved to humble him during his alone time, walking into his room to mess with his things while he grew flustered.

His packed schedule gave him little room for decompression. He could get testy after being too social, Nadia and his roommate, Johnson, noticed.

When it came to college, Declin knew he



Declin Ermer, far right, stands with his volleyball teammates from Wheaton Warrenville South High School. Travel team coaches frequently tried to recruit him, but he preferred to play with his friends, his father Eric Ermer said.

CONTRIBUTED | JEFFREY AND PAMELA NIELSEN

wanted to get out of Illinois, she said. He traveled across Wyoming, Montana and Washington for college tours, and she said Missoula spoke to him the most. He liked the town, the atmosphere, the outdoors and athletics. It was new, fresh.

"I think he wanted a fresh start," Nadia said. Their mom didn't want him to be so far away, but Nadia thinks the distance made him more open. During breaks, he came back to Illinois with new interests and curiosities.

"He suddenly knew every detail about Star Wars and Marvel and big movies," Nadia remembers. "His roommates and friends really brought that out of him. They made him more of a geek."

After Declin died, Nadia moved to Missoula and into the room he used to live in. She'd wanted to move out of Illinois for a while, and she'd grown to love Missoula when she visited her brother. His fall gave her a reason to come, but when Declin's share of the rent was due months after his death and his friends searched for a new roommate, it just made sense to stay.

She works remotely for Hyatt Hotels, usually creating their email templates and similar graphics, so the transition wasn't hard on her career.

Four male roommates make things messy at times, but they share a love of adventure and the outdoors. She sends them memes on Instagram that they've received from Declin before. It's an echo, but a pleasant one.

She never saw Declin in the room, so it doesn't feel strange to live there; it's refreshing. She gets to be in the world he lived in, and it feels right to her.

Fortnite that summer, and Declin dragged Johnson to the gym more times than he could count. They moved in together, first into the Sigma Chi house, then into a place of their own with a few roommates.

Living with Declin could be dizzying. He started his days at 5 a.m., getting in a workout before class or a work shift. Declin worked two jobs, one helping at Campus Recreation and one helping physical therapists as an aide at Alpine Physical Therapy. He never rested throughout the day for longer than an hour.

"I think he always feels like he needs to be doing something," Johnson said. "If he had a two-hour break, he'd ask you to golf or work out."

He motivated Johnson to improve himself, he said. He thought if he did the same workouts and the same diets, drank the same amount of water as Declin,

he'd be more like him. It was a two-way street; as much as Johnson tried to emulate Declin, Declin found ways to be like Johnson.

Sometimes, Declin brought him to parties. Other times, Johnson convinced Declin to have a night in, drinking wine and watching "The Notebook."

"Competing against each other, and wanting to not just better ourselves, but better each other," Johnson said. "It's something I miss."

It was almost annoying how naturally talented Declin was, Johnson said. But Declin couldn't let himself be less than his best. He needed to give 110%, Johnson said. Always.

Riley Hector, another friend and classmate, said she thinks it helped him feel in control. Hector, who is studying athletic training, has known Declin since their freshman year, and as another student interested in athletics and medicine, they had nearly every class together. When Declin felt anxious, he poured himself into his classes, she said. When he was angry, he worked out.

"He put this pressure on himself to succeed," Hector said. "He loved his family so much, and he wanted to be like them. If he didn't think he was good enough at something, it'd become his goal."

IN WORK

Declin wanted to be a firefighter like his dad, but Eric didn't want him to jump straight in.

"You know, 25% of us firefighters get injured on the job and never get to finish our 20-year career because we ended up broken," Eric remembers telling Declin. "Go get a degree, and

have a plan B if you ever end up getting hurt, if you still want to be a firefighter."

Declin decided to become a physical therapist, which required far more education than Eric expected. Declin and his parents split the tuition bill into thirds, and with enough scholarships and paychecks from his jobs, he was ready to graduate with nearly \$10,000 in the bank.

Bonnie Netzley, a medical office manager at Alpine, said she misjudged him at first.

"It's funny how we make these assumptions," she said. "The first time I saw him, I saw a muscle-y sports boy and thought he'd be some ego... It took less than a week to prove me wrong."

Declin worked as an aide at Alpine, meaning he helped with tasks like preparing ice bags. But Declin did far more than he was asked, Netzley said, and he had something small but powerful in an industry like theirs: compassion. "It's the difference between pointing someone towards an exit and personally walking with them to their car," she said. "He was so kind. He was going to go so far."

As someone who's worked at Alpine for 15 years, Netzley has worked with hundreds of aides. She said he was the best of them all, always encouraging others and showing genuine excitement when clients reached a goal.

He left a void when he died. She remembers seeing the email on a Sunday morning and putting her head in her hands.

Alpine Physical Therapy created the Declin Ermer Memorial Aide Award in his honor, a \$250 gift to aides who've worked at Alpine for six months and are pursuing a career in health-care. It's one of two scholarships to be given in Declin's name, and its first recipient will be announced later this month.

The other scholarship, the Declin Ermer Memorial Endowed Scholarship, comes from his fraternity. It will give a few thousand dollars to a student in Sigma Chi who shows academic prowess, leadership and kindness.

"He was something special," Netzley said. "There's a reason we wanted to do something special for him in return."

BROTHERHOOD

Missoula's Sigma Chi house has been home to a chapter since the late 1930s, and 65-year-old Bob Rowe has been involved with it in some capacity for at least half of its lifetime.

He knows every piece of the house, from the framed memorials of the 24 Sigma Chi members who died in World War II, to the powerful wooden beams that have stayed steady against decades of rowdy college boys.

Rowe commissioned the basketball court built in the backyard years ago. After his parents passed away, they left a decent chunk of money to Rowe and his brothers. With his brothers' permission, he paid for the court as a space for students to be active and healthy.

He knew Declin through Sigma Chi. Declin was the scholarship chairman, so they worked together to organize scholarship dinners.

His family may have said he couldn't accept



Declin Ermer and his mother, Laura Townsend Ermer, pose at a mom-son luncheon hosted by Wheaton Warrenville South High School in Wheaton, Illinois. CONTRIBUTED | LAURA TOWNSEND ERMER

a compliment, but Declin made sure his fellow students could receive honors with grace. Rowe remembers Declin straightening his classmates' ties and correcting their posture.

Other alumni remember Declin dragging classmates by the collar to study groups, interrogating them about their classwork and projects before he let them out for the night, Rowe recalled. It came up in meetings alumni had about how to honor Declin moving forward.

"He was well-respected," Rowe said. "A lot of what you think of fraternity is a stereotype. Someone has to clean it up, and that was Declin."

When news of his death arrived, alumni developed two plans to honor him: dedicate the basketball court to him, and name the endowed scholarship after him.

Rowe wanted to make sure it was done right, and he worked closely with the family to set the plans in motion. Nadia, with a degree in graphic design, helped design a bronze plaque to be mounted near the fraternity's backyard fire pits.

"Declin was a man that led by example," the

current plaque design reads. "His life was inspired by action and not by words or platitudes. All Honor to His Name."

AND SO ON

When Trey Johnson received the phone call that Declin fell off the balcony, he didn't think it was as serious as it turned out to be. Declin was a titanic figure. A fall wouldn't slow him down.

Then, Eric Ermer arrived after rushing in from Illinois. He stayed the night with Johnson and their roommates. Instead of sleeping, they sat in the living room and joked about how embarrassed Declin would be when he woke up.

Eric didn't react too much. As a firefighter, he stays level-headed when tragedy strikes. His calm reassured Johnson that everything would be OK.

"It was nice having an Ermer in the house," Johnson said. "It still is."

When Eric flew with Declin to Seattle, it didn't feel real. The calm came from a professional need to watch. Observe. He's helped others in this situation before, but now it was



Trey Johnson, left, and Riley Hector, right, met Declin Ermer and became friends with him during their freshman year at the University of Montana. ANDY MEPHAM | MONTANA KAIMIN

his son.

"You're not even really yourself," Eric said. "It's clinical. He's going to die. It didn't really sink in until about two months later."

In the whirlwind, Eric said it was like he was too busy to grieve. Yet, Johnson said he could tell Eric was shaken. Just like Declin, there was something unconquerable about him, Johnson said, so it was that much more profound to hear something change.

"[Eric] called us to give us the news that Declin wasn't going to make it," Johnson said. "And it was something in his voice. I'll never forget that feeling."

Johnson and his roommates delivered the news to the fraternity the next day. He said the air became dead. He remembers people's faces morphing in grief. He remembers a mutual friend falling to her knees and bawling in the driveway.

"I don't have a good memory," Johnson said. "But I think that will stay with me for the rest of my life."

Johnson, Hector and their friends went to the celebrations of life and memorials, but fall semester finals were approaching. There was almost no time to process. Weeks went by, and the spring semester began.

Johnson started therapy and had small breakthroughs to help him grieve. He's not sure if the idea of Declin watching over him made him feel better or worse.

"He inspired me to better myself every day. Now that he's not here, I don't have that motivation anymore," Johnson said.

Stepping into the gym alone or hearing the music Declin used to play to hype Johnson up for parties brings both friendly and unnerving reminders. He's not sure he wants Declin to see him fall behind.

But at the same time, he thinks Declin would be proud of him. He'll walk at graduation soon, and Declin will be receiving a posthumous degree. It's something they can share, he said.

"Being able to talk about it is just a way to kind of remember him," Johnson said. "I can keep his legacy alive."

Riley Hector is not graduating yet, but she said she was excited to see Declin go to physical therapy school and take the next steps in his journey.

"I think that stings the most," Hector said. "He worked so hard to get that degree and now he's frozen at 22."

Two ceremonies will be held in honor of Declin's graduation, one by the University, and the other by his degree program, the School of Integrative Physiology and Athletic Training. Then, alumni will officially dedicate the Sigma Chi house's basketball court to Declin. Declin's family will be traveling to attend.

All the ceremonies are a sign of how much impact he had, Eric said.

"He really touched everyone," Eric said. "He's a good man. A better man than me. I'm happy he brought so much good into this world. It's all I could've asked."

UM graduate student to release new jazz-based album

BRIDGET PACK
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University of Montana student Skyler Mendell is celebrating the completion of his master's degree in music by releasing his first album, "Points In Time."

Mendell, 30, is from Washington and came to UM in the fall of 2021 after teaching high school music for five years. He made the album with his band, "Skyler Mendell Sextets," for his master's professional project.

"If I could express what I wanted with words, then I wouldn't write music," Mendell said.

Mendell's album is an accumulation of melodies he wrote that all carry personal meaning. He said it is easier to express emotions through music. He describes his music with the band as having a conversation, by playing their instruments in response to each other.

There are six members of the band; Mendell on the trumpet, Aidan Robinson on the saxophone, Sean Stineford on the trombone, Dylan Bautista on the piano, Connor Racicot on the bass and Llwyn Clark-Gaynor on the drums. Mendell formed the

band shortly after enrolling in the master's program.

Mendell started playing the trumpet at 11 years old and went to trumpet camps for five years, where UM Jazz Director Rob Tapper taught. Tapper was a big reason Mendell applied to UM for grad school.

When Mendell first went to college, he made a deal with his parents that he would get his teaching endorsement in tandem with his music degree. After his junior year in college, he found he liked teaching and taught from 2015 to 2021. But during the pandemic, Mendell decided to take a break from teaching to take his career to the next level.

Mendell first looked into master's programs in 2020, and was inspired to return to school after his first Zoom meeting with a potential grad school. That's when his first idea for a tune popped into his head.

"Writing music always seemed like this big scary thing, so I never tried it before then," he said.

Mendell met a friend named Ben Macy during his teaching career, who helped him take his music further. Mendell describes it as more than just reading a note and playing. To him, it was learning the story behind the

music. He was asked to play a show with other master's students for a jazz show when he first arrived.

"Everyone was so good, it was intimidating," Mendell said. "I remember thinking that could be a level I am at when I leave here."

Mendell said he knew he had to form a band, or his music wouldn't get played. The "Skyler Mendell Sextets" have played many shows around Missoula, including in this year's Jazzoula festival and a regular show at Draught Works.

"It's taken a while for it to sink in that we will no longer be playing together as this group after graduation," Mendell said.

After graduating, Mendell will head to the University of Northern Colorado to complete his doctorate. He said he feels like he has achieved his goal and is ready for the next step. "Points in Time" will be online on Bandcamp, a website for artists to upload their work.

"If the listeners can get something out of my music, that's all I can ask for," he said.

A release party for "Points in Time" is set for May 7 at 7:30 p.m. at the Zootown Arts Community Center with live music.



From left to right, Aidan Robinson on saxophone, Skyler Mendell on trumpet and Sean Stineford on trombone, play to a packed audience at the Zootown Arts Community Center on April 28.

CHRIS LODMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN

Missoula LGBTQIA+ community recharges together after rally for Zephyr

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While enjoying a home-cooked meal and laughing with friends, Democratic state Rep. Zooey Zephyr said she felt recharged as a 24-hour Missoula protest rallying to "let her speak" wound to a close on April 29.

The day prior consisted of a march through Missoula, a rally at Caras Park and a drag show. The event was organized in less than 72 hours by more than 50 members of the Missoula LGBTQIA+ community after Zephyr was barred from participating on the House floor for the remainder of the 2023 session.

The silencing of Zephyr began on April 18, when Zephyr said legislators would have "blood on their hands" if they passed Senate Bill 99, a bill banning gender-affirming care for minors. Montana's Republican Gov. Greg Gianforte signed that bill into law April 28 and it will go into effect on Oct. 1.

Zephyr was not called on for the rest of the week. On April 23, a protest started in the House. Speaker of the House Matt Regier, R-Kalispell, asked representatives to leave the floor when protestors began chanting, but Zephyr did not. On April 25, the House took a vote on whether Zephyr should be punished for "encouraging the protestors' actions." The vote passed with all Republicans voting yes.

Shortly after, event organizers started planning on getting to work in reaction to the Legislature. According to Koy Runs Behind, a member of Queers 4 Queers, a local nonprofit, people were trying to figure out if it would be ideal to protest, or provide a caring space to process and be surrounded by their peers. In the end, more than 50 organizers decided to do both.

"Missoula knows how to turn their values into action and turn that action into change and I think we're seeing that process mid-stream right now," Zephyr said. "It was just at the right moment, and I feel blessed to be a part of that."

Organizers said the April 29 event was not just about Zephyr being barred from the House floor, but instead a celebration of "queer joy." The event allowed queer, transgender and two-spirit people to come together.

"I think queer joy to me is when you finally come into resonance with yourself," Zephyr said. "It is this moment where you don't just accept who you are, but you get to stand tall enough, and the moment you do that, you see the community doing the same thing. You become in resonance with them and you find everywhere you go just echoes of that joy."

People started the day with morning yoga, then making art. The event was a time for people to rest after the unrest in the capital, according to Sam Duncan, another Queers 4 Queers member.

"I feel like there's nothing that trans people are better at than throwing a party and, like, bringing joy," Duncan said. "So that's been our goal. Today, we want to have the opportunity to heal and slow down and just be with each other and eat nourishing food, do yoga, because this shit is really fucking hard."

There were stations to create art using spray paint, colored pencils and chalk. Organizers also helped people create screen-prints and relief print clothes and posters. All of the designs printed were made by local transgender artists, including University of Montana alum Runs Behind.

There was a button-making station that included papers for buttons saying things like: "Let her speak," "Regier is a baby" and "Queer Joy." All of those designs were created by local transgender artists.

State Rep. SJ Howell, D-Missoula, who works alongside Zephyr, also made an



Zooey Zephyr talks with Keegan Medrano, Zuri Moreno and SJ Howell at the celebration of Queer Joy. This was the last event of the 24-hour protest. The day prior included a march, a rally, a drag show and dancing until midnight.

NANCE BESTON | MONTANA KAIMIN

appearance. They are non-binary and said although they are a representative, they attended the event as a person, not a public official.

The event had a variety of people, including children. Howell said seeing the families

there was their favorite part. They are a parent and said they have heard a lot of rhetoric about queer people and children

"I know that my kid is safest in our community," Howell said. "But, it's really lovely to be here and see it all in action."

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What to know about UM’s new indoor practice facility

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After months of fundraising, UM Athletics continued its run of ambitious projects under Athletic Director Kent Haslam with the official announcement and groundbreaking of its new indoor practice facility.

“The facilities that our student-athletes spend really 90% of their time [are] in locker rooms, training rooms, academic centers, practice — that’s where they spend the bulk of their time,” Haslam said. “And so investing in those facilities has always been the top of what we’ve wanted to get done.”

The \$10.2 million project is entirely privately funded.

One bonus aspect of this project is its accessibility for non-UM teams and clubs. This facility, in order to make money, will have rentable space that Haslam said could be used from 6 a.m. to 1 a.m. every day.

The facility will have six sprint lanes, practice areas for field events like javelin, space for a football and soccer field and striping for four pickleball courts.

But even with open use for Missoulians, it comes with some questions.

This facility takes up the River Bowl fields, an area next to the Adams Center that’s commonly used for recreation among students and residents of the area. This facility will remove 111,033 square feet of free, open-access space. That is the same size as the Gallagher Business Building on UM’s campus.

“There is a rental contract. We gotta generate revenue off of this to pay for the operations and maintenance of the facility,” Haslam said. “We’ll have rental opportunities for the community soccer and lacrosse and different community-based members. And there will be just intramural time that they can use for flag football, or ultimate Frisbee or any of those types of things.”

In addition, this facility fits into an exemption on the Montana University Systems Environmental Review policy.

While close to the Clark Fork River, the area occupied by the facility is both not in a flood plain and is under 10 acres in size, allowing it to be considered an infill development.

Infill developments usually occur when redesignating open space in an urban environment that already has existing infrastructure, like streets. These parameters help limit the review policy allowing for a lack of oversight when it comes to sustainability measures.

Athletes and athletic groups around the city of Missoula have a new space, but the prices are still not available for rental spaces in the facility. The cons come down to how sustainable the facility is, especially with it taking up significant natural space on campus.

The project will be finished sometime during fall 2023. Now, that the official groundbreaking happened on April 21, the construction that many students are accustomed to on the UM campus continues.

The facility is what folks like Haslam and Sports Information Director Eric Taber claim to be an addition not just for athletics, but the people of Missoula.

Among many other projects built under Haslam’s tenure, he created a new women’s softball team along with the Champions Center, a \$14 million weight and practice room for student athletes.

Under Haslam, millions of dollars have been put into high-end facilities for its student athletes. The indoor practice facility follows suit, as it is not only another pricey addition for the athletes, but it is all privately funded.

“There’s gonna be a permanent structure or two permanent structures on the east end that’ll have restrooms, offices, mechanical equipment storage, as well as an athletic training facility,” Taber said.

Even with no taxpayer or tuition money going into this facility, the true impact the facility will have is unclear. With construction everywhere across campus, it’s just a matter of time before campus returns to normalcy.



An honorary groundbreaking takes place at the new Griz practice field on April 21. The indoor practice field will cost \$10.2 million to construct. LUKAS PRINOS | MONTANA KAIMIN

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UM Rodeo brings heat at Missoula Fairgrounds

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A lively crowd attended the last rodeo of the 2023 college season. The rodeo team competes in the Big Sky Region, part of the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association. It completed five rodeos last fall and five this spring.

All the teams across Montana competed

in the final weekend hosted at the Missoula County Fairgrounds, but only the top two teams in each category make it to the championships.

The top 10 fastest times from Friday and Saturday afternoons appeared in the all-finals performance.

Three UM students made it to the final rounds Saturday night in barrel racing. Lauren Johnson, a UM senior, timed 17.85 seconds Friday, Brooklin Baukol,

freshman, 18.10 and Cheyenne Carl, sophomore, timed 17.91. Johnson excelled in barrel racing, placing third in Friday’s performance and fourth in Saturday’s finals with a 17.89 time.

“I’m so proud of our seniors, they did so

well. I’m really proud of Lauren (Johnson), she’s made some great runs,” Madison Yerran, assistant UM rodeo coach, said after the rodeo. “All of our other girls have also done so well, I can’t wait to see what the girls do in the coming years.”



UPPER LEFT: Lauren Johnson, a senior on the UM rodeo team, watches her teammates compete at the Missoula Fairgrounds. BRIDGET PACK | MONTANA KAIMIN

UPPER RIGHT: Ashtyn Carlson rounds a barrel Saturday morning. Carlson is a senior on the rodeo team in barrel racing. BRIDGET PACK | MONTANA KAIMIN

ABOVE: Mike Nannini coils his rope back up after successfully roping a calf in the tie-down roping competition. CHRIS LODMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN

LEFT: Representing the UM Rodeo team, Trevor Klind from Glasgow, Montana, exits the gate to chase down a calf in the tie-down roping competition. CHRIS LODMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN

BASEBALL = SUMMER

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MAY 30 TH	2023 OPENING NIGHT
JUNE 2 ND	LITTLE LEAGUE NIGHT
JUNE 9 TH	STAR WARS NIGHT
JUNE 15 TH	 PRIDE NIGHT
JULY 7 TH	BASEBALL BREWFEST 
JULY 21 ST	WIZARDS & WANDS NIGHT
AUG. 4 TH	TIE DYE NIGHT
AUG. 10 TH	RODEO DAY GAME
AUG. 18 TH	INDIGENOUS CELEBRATION
AUG. 31 ST	UNIV. OF MONTANA GAME
SEPT. 8 TH	FOOD TRUCK NIGHT

WEEKLY PROMOS

FUN(D) RAISING TUESDAYS
WOOF WEDNESDAYS
THIRSTY THURSDAYS

PHENOMINAL FRIDAYS
KIDS FREE SUNDAYS

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MAY 30 TH	2023 POSTER SCHEDULE 
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JULY 7 TH	COWBOY HAT GIVEAWAY ON BREWFEST 
JULY 8 TH	FLY BOX FOR FLY FISHING NIGHT 
AUGUST 4 TH	TIE DYE NIGHT 
AUGUST 18 TH	FANNY PACK GIVEAWAY 
AUGUST 31 ST	MONTANA GRIZZLIES TRAPPER HAT
SEPT. 8 TH	FOOD TRUCK + CASH GIVEAWAY NIGHT
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JUNE 9 TH	AUG. 18 TH
PRIDE NIGHT	UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA NIGHT
JUNE 15 TH	AUG. 31 ST

 FIREWORK NIGHTS 
JUNE 9TH JUNE 30TH JULY 21ST

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