

MONTANA KAIMIN

FROM BOOKWORM TO BONE-CRUSHER

Story by Hannah Benitez
Photos by Aiden Havens

MY FOUR-WEEK CRASH COURSE IN BRUISES AND FEMINISM

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Cover photo by Aiden Havens

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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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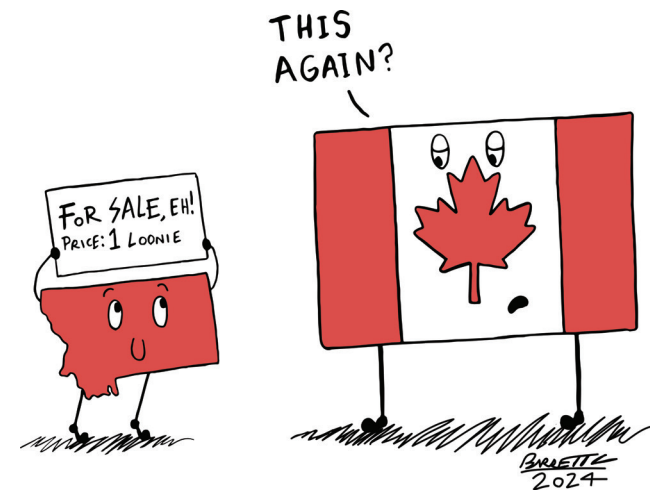
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FUNNIES



DETECTIVE SQUIRREL: SE 2 EP 6



Support women’s sports, including your own

The University of Montana shows up for Griz football, rain or shine, win or lose. But our other sports, specifically our women’s teams, deserve more attention. And the low turnout isn’t because our women’s teams are less successful than our men’s teams.

Griz women’s tennis won the Big Sky Conference regular season this year. Lady Griz basketball has the most titles of any program in the conference, but still drew nearly 5,000 less fans last season than men’s basketball.

In the last few years, Griz soccer alone has set several new all-time school records and has won back-to-back undefeated Big Sky Conference championships – the first time in conference history. Its prowess is clear. Griz soccer is as dominant as, if not more than, Griz football. I should know how strong the team is – I’m on it.

While Griz football enjoys sold-out crowds of over 25,000, Griz soccer lacks a solid student section. And unlike football, which competes in the Football Championship Subdivision, FCS, a secondary level of Division I football, Griz soccer plays at the top level of NCAA Division I. It achieved a #2 ranking in the West Region by the United Soccer Coaches poll and national #1 in save percentage. In the past two seasons, Griz soccer boasted impressive wins over teams like Boise State, Oklahoma and Oregon State.

Washington-Grizzly Stadium is often considered one of the loudest stadiums around. Standing in the student section, we’re piled in like sardines. The energy rarely dips, and the players are shrouded in glory. Fans shout the players’ names and sport their jerseys. In 2023, the football season saw over 225,000 fans across the season. It makes me envious. Why couldn’t I have been a big shot football player? Why was I cursed to be the undeserved female athlete?

Don’t get me wrong, I’m grateful for football. Its fundraising helps create the many benefits athletes at UM have like the academic center and new indoor training facility.

But as a player on the field, I know having a crowd can turn the tide of the game and make you feel like you matter. Suddenly you’re not playing women’s soccer, you’re just playing soccer.

When Griz soccer broke the attendance record in 2023 against Ohio State with 1,973 fans, head coach Chris Citowicki said to Montana Sports, “It’s almost emotional, right? To get this many people here, to see this kind of support and feel the energy, it was beautiful.”

And it was beautiful, but it doesn’t

feel like quite enough. There’s a unique intensity and pride that fills South Campus Stadium when fans come out for Griz soccer, helping cheer and jeer. Still, attendance could be higher. Despite record-setting community support, the absence of a dedicated, returning student section is noticeable, especially for the athletes who work tirelessly to build the program. When my professors talk to me about soccer and encourage my classmates to attend, I’ll get a “good luck,” but they won’t be in the stands.

Women’s sports can and will draw crowds when they get the attention they deserve. NCAA and professional women’s basketball, with the help of powerhouse player Caitlin Clark, is breaking viewership records left and right. Earlier this year, the March Madness women’s final had four million more viewers than the men’s final, according to Nielsen Media Research. Nebraska and Omaha’s women’s volleyball teams rallied over 92,000 fans at a single game, held in Nebraska’s football stadium, in August 2023.

The fact that celebrities like Patrick Mahomes, Kevin Durant, Natalie Portman and Serena Williams are investing in women’s sports emphasizes the momentum in women’s athletics. Deloitte Insights predicts that in 2024, women’s elite sports revenue will surpass \$1 billion for the first time, 300% higher than predicted in 2021. Actress Whoopi Goldberg recently announced the launch of the All Women’s Sports Network, a 24/7 sports network dedicated exclusively to women’s sports. The network aims to address the lack of media coverage for female athletes by offering global coverage across mainstream and emerging sports. Sports bars dedicated to just women’s sports are popping up across the country. It all feels like a huge step forward and one I never expected. So let’s follow what others in the nation are doing and turn out for our women’s teams.

Don’t just show up for soccer, but all of Griz women’s teams. Make the drive off campus to watch conference champion tennis, show up for the rest of volleyball’s season and rally around Lady Griz basketball this winter. As a student body, our team spirit should transcend something as superfluous as gender, so show up, shout loud and celebrate each other.

— Bayliss Flynn, Audio editor

Like it? Hate it? Let us know.
Email us your opinions at claire.bernard@umontana.edu

Bleating red, white and blue



Sam Manno sits with his goat, Intuition, by the Oval, along with his other “vote” goats. He brought them to help motivate students to vote Nov. 4. **RACHEL YEAGER | MONTANA KAIMIN**

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

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

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Edited by Margie E. Burke

HOW TO SOLVE:

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

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

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

Briefs & Blotter

Professor receives funding for rural and Indigenous school psychologists; UM researcher publishes climate change study; Native artist designs a Griz basketball logo

PROFESSOR RECEIVES \$3.5M GRANT FOR MORE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN SCHOOLS

A University of Montana psychology professor received \$3.5 million in funding for her initiative focused on providing mental health resources in rural and Indigenous schools across Montana.

The rural and Indigenous school-based mental health and empowerment initiative, created by professor Anisa Goforth, aims to increase the number of qualified school psychologists in Montana's K-12 school system.

Goforth directs graduate training for UM's school of psychology and said the educationally focused program graduates around six graduates each year. She said the new initiative is set to produce 27 graduates with the necessary skills for mental health services in Montana's rural and indigenous schools.

"Overall, we expect this project to increase capacity for over 20,000 K-12 students across the state," Goforth told UM News. "There is just such a need with so many students struggling with behavioral issues, anxiety, thoughts of suicide and their mental health in general."

Goforth also hopes an increased number of school psychologists in Indigenous schools will create more interest in the career and fuel the pipeline of rural school mental health professionals. (Clayton Murphy)

UM RESEARCHER RELEASES STUDY WITH NEW DISCOVERY ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

A study led by University of Montana researcher, Zhihua Liu, shows global warming causing an increase in the annual rising and falling of carbon dioxide levels especially in northern areas.

The study was based on the concept that the warmer temperatures of spring and summer cause plants to grow faster which then leads to an increase in the amount of carbon pulled or breathed in from the atmosphere. As temperatures drop, the plants grow slower and use less carbon breathing it back out. The study showed that because of increasing temperatures, the effect was accelerated in northern areas.

According to the study, the seasonal amplitude of carbon dioxide has increased by 50% in northern arctic and boreal ecosystems since the 1960s.

"Warming temperatures are extending the growing season, allowing for greater photosynthesis and carbon dioxide draw-

down," Liu said to UM News. "However, this increased productivity is also accompanied by heightened respiration rates, which are offsetting some of the carbon sink potential in these regions."

Liu is a researcher for UM's Numerical Terradynamic Research Group, which uses satellites to study the Earth's ecosystems. Ashley Ballantyne, a co-author and fellow researcher to Liu said to UM News that the study is a product of 15 years of compiled research from the Arctic Boreal Vulnerability Experiment — a NASA funded study that has researchers from around the world studying climate change in arctic and boreal regions.

"It's a Herculean lift by Dr. Liu and the team, synthesizing a vast amount of research into a comprehensive review," Ballantyne said in a UM press release. Ballantyne said synthesizing all the data is a very important step in better understanding the effects of climate change.

"We've confirmed that more active plant growth is the main reason carbon is cycling faster in northern regions," he said to UM News. "Scientists have noticed this trend for a while, but by combining data from multiple studies, we were able to better understand the specific processes driving this change." (Corbin Vanderby)

UM ALUMNA AND NATIVE ARTIST MAKES NEW DESIGN FOR GRIZ BASKETBALL

Kaylene Big Knife, a University of Montana alumna and Native artist from the Chippewa Cree Tribe, designed a logo to be worn by both Griz basketball teams in UM's third annual campaign inspired by the Nike N7 program.

The Nike N7 program uses Indigenous designs on sports wear to encourage Indigenous youth to play sports.

Big Knife specializes in floral art and used this in her design, incorporating sagebrush butter cups, Chippewa blossoms and field chick weeds, all surrounding a cursive Griz logo and a rising sun, which she said is the warmth of your heart and the power of rising through adversity.

Official Nike branded merchandise with Big Knife's designs are now available at the Go Griz Store, Missoula Scheels and the M Store. Licensing proceeds will help fund the Kyiyo Pow Wow, UM's annual student-run powwow.

"Walking into the UM Bookstore and seeing it on the shelves was a very monumental moment in my career," Big Knife said to UM News.

Big Knife also said she was motivated

to make a good design as she is the first female Native artist to design a logo for UM's annual Nike N7 inspired campaign.

"Being the first female Native artist for this, I wanted to do my best," she said. "I'm putting in 110%." (Corbin Vanderby)

The fish: An uncertain fate of Arctic grayling in Montana



Brennan's Wave, a section of the Clark Fork of the Columbia River, as seen on a late fall evening. Scientists are currently developing tools to model fish behavior in Montana rivers.

MARLEY BARBOEISEL | MONTANA KAIMIN

The Arctic grayling fish is sensitive to small temperature changes in its habitat leaving the population in the Big Hole Watershed at risk of going extinct. Conservationists and committees are working to preserve the area and to understand what affects grayling populations. To do this they need cold hard data.

Zachary Hoylman, the assistant state climatologist for the Montana Climate Office at the University of Montana, is developing a tool that could help us understand the grayling's future. "The idea is that we're using artificial intelligence to simulate stream flow, and then we can use those simulations of stream flow to then understand population dynamics," Hoylman said. "Just like the first step towards understanding the problem is to measure it and to understand how things are changing and how quickly and in what way."



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

POLICE BLOTTER

ABBY WILLIAMS
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You guys are wild and ready for Thanksgiving based on these crimes. It's better to get all your mischief out now, so you're ready to deal with those relatives around the table when slicing the turkey. But when you come back, maybe chill out and not bicker over petty shit?

NOV. 1 – CYBERBULLIES ARE REAL?

There was a violation of communication on a social media platform, where threats of violence were made toward another person. While there are no suspects, there will be a criminal charge toward the instigator. Who said cyberbullying was dead? No but seriously, just block the person. Also, why are we bullying people online in the first place? We should bring diaries back, so we have a safe, secure place to write down grievances.

NOV. 1 – BETA BEHAVIOR

There was a verbal fight between two men over laundry at the University golf course and the University of Montana Police Department gave both men citations. This is actually hilarious. I mean, I'm laughing while writing this. At least they know how to do their laundry. That's a green flag. A light green flag, but a green one.

NOV. 6 – JUST CROSS THE STREET

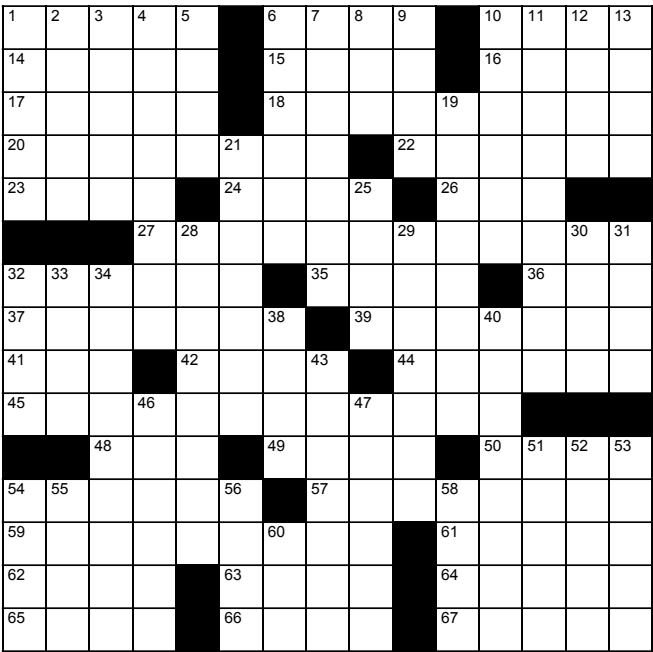
UMPD went to Miller Hall to deal with a reported weed odor. The police made contact and found a bong, which got the student referred for conduct. I mean, how hard is it to cross the street and get arrested by city police like a real man? Or you can go to the smoker bench in front of Jesse Hall. There aren't any video cameras to catch the bike thieves, so they aren't going to see you.

NOV. 6 – VISCOUS SUBSTANCE PT. 2

There was an act of vandalism on Cinabar Drive reported to UMPD as someone had smeared yogurt on someone else's door. The case has been closed with no suspects. OK, this one isn't as bad as the fake blood on the dorm door, but I HATE yogurt, and I would cry if someone did that to me. I would start a support group, I'm not kidding. UMPD needs to open up the case and lock-up that foul creature.

NOV. 6 – A NEW LOW

A student who parked their car in Lot H reported their windshield wipers had been stolen. There is no video footage and no suspects. This is really fucking funny. I mean, stealing windshield wipers? I know we are getting close to snow season, but maybe you can scrape enough money to go to Jiffy Lube and get a pair.



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ACROSS

- 1 Caravan beast
6 In things
10 Sluggers' stats
14 Amazon assistant
15 Here, in Madrid
16 Slangy ending for "buck"
17 Wallops
18 It may keep things moving
20 Gilbert and Sullivan work
22 Hits, old-style
23 TV's "___-Team"
24 Longings
26 LA clock setting
27 Business tax deduction
32 Squid cousins
35 Sounds of reproof
36 Course setting: Abbr.
37 Field for Marie Curie
39 Stops
41 Listening device
42 Alley prowlers
44 Odd pages
45 Race with jumps
48 To and ___
49 Unit of loudness
50 Feature of 1-Across
54 Laughed loudly
57 Hertz rival
59 Paycheck deduction
61 ___ cum laude
62 Lenovo competitor
63 Relaxed gait
64 Writer Asimov

- 65 With a discount of
66 Figure in red
67 Perception

DOWN

- 1 Explorer John
2 Hebrew letter
3 Free-for-all
4 Arch's outer curve
5 Use a surgical beam
6 Lose momentum
7 Iconic hairspray brand
8 Do a voice-over
9 Knights
10 Certain bigot
11 Most ill-mannered
12 Skye of "Say Anything"
13 They're often loaded
19 Stalemates
21 Hardly surprising
25 Missile in '90s news

- 28 "Paradise Lost", e.g.
29 Repeating
30 Catch or latch follower
31 Capone nemesis
32 Prefers, with "for"
33 Online dialogue
34 Bodoni, et. al.
38 One of Hitchcock's 39
40 Cold storage
43 Spirit of Salzburg
46 Proofer's finds
47 Deceptive schemes
51 Deprive of courage
52 Michelle and Cass
53 Finish second
54 Iranian money
55 Years back
56 Farmer's place, in a kids' song
58 Goddess of fertility
60 Overly

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

What's your perfect piece of cake?

KEELY PROEBSTEL
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Between increasingly crappy weather, the 24-hour news cycle and the slump between midterms and finals, there's a lot to dislike about November. It's time to stop running from your problems. Grab your favorite blanket, watch some junk on YouTube and embrace comfort. Treating yourself should be a piece of cake, and the bakery is open, bitches!

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21): Black forest cake, gateau if you're feeling fancy, is the classic iconic cake. It's got the pretty frosting swirls, the decorative cherries on top and a surprising amount of alcohol. It's a "look queen" of a cake that parties hard. Sound familiar, Scorp?

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21): Banana-pineapple spice may sound a little weird on paper, but hummingbird cake kicks ass. It's not for everyone, but neither are you, Sag, and that's okay. The people who stan you really love you, and the people who don't ... Well, you're not really on their radar.

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19): Some people say red velvet cake is a little pretentious, and they're right. It's basically chocolate with food coloring, but that doesn't stop it from being ridiculously popular. It might be a basic-bitch cake, but it's an iconic basic bitch. Just like you, Cap!

AQUARIUS (JAN 20-FEB 18): Like drunk sushi, ice cream cake sounds good in theory, but is hit-or-miss in execution. Choosing ice cream cake is choosing to gamble on either happily reliving childhood nostalgia or cleaning up a giant mess when it melts in your car. High risk, high reward is your thing, Aquarius, and we all know you're going to try that shit anyway.

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20): You're baby, Pisces, and there's no cake sweeter than angel food cake. Like you, it's sweet, adorable and will completely fall apart if you so much as look at it wrong. Bakers literally have to use a special knife to cut it and you literally have to have your brand of hard seltzer at the bar. Twinsies!

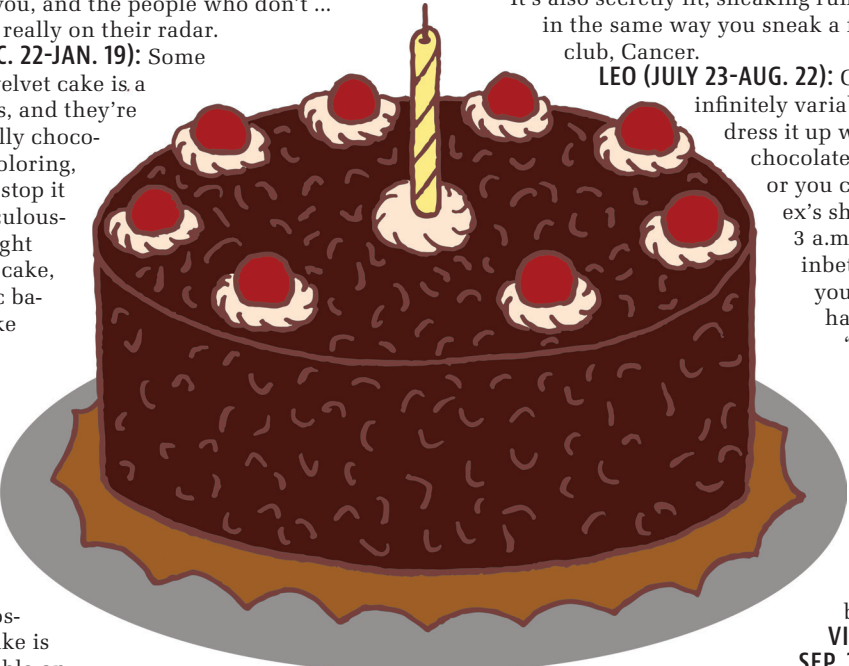
ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19): Confetti is objectively the most chaotic cake flavor and you're prone to waking up and choosing mayhem, Aries. It's the only cake where the defining overtone is "more sugar," and it's the perfect thing to fuel your next rampage. The sprinkles

just make puking up cake-flavored vodka extra fun in the morning!

TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20): Don't let the name fool you, the only thing that's sinister about devil's food cake is the nutrition label. Not that you give a damn, Taurus, since no one's better at ignoring scary facts in favor of a good time than you. You can have your cake and eat it too, but remember, desserts, energy drinks and vapes don't make for a balanced diet.

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20): Gemini is the sign of duality, and just like you, strawberry shortcake is built on contradiction. Much like you on a Friday night, it's cute, it takes forever to get ready, and it'll end up crumbling in a few hours anyway. Maybe stash the crappy pre-wrapped kind in your bag for a pick-me-up the next time you're crying in a bathroom stall downtown?

CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22): The '70s are back, baby, and they're bringing pineapple upside-down cake with them. Photogenic and eternally popular at family gatherings, it's kind of the "mom friend" of cakes. It's also secretly lit, sneaking rum into the recipe in the same way you sneak a flask into the club, Cancer.



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22): Cheesecake is infinitely variable. You can dress it up with fruit and chocolate and feel fancy or you can eat it in your ex's shirt, crying at 3 a.m. There is no inbetween. Leo, if your friends can't handle you at your "half-frozen convenience store" worst, then they don't deserve your "chocolate caramel macchiato" best either.

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 22): It's that time of year again, when the pumpkin-flavored plague takes over our society. One of the few desserts to successfully incorporate squash, pumpkin cake is also one of the few to survive the wrath of the anti-pumpkin spice crowd. Much like you, Virgo, it's practical, unpretentious and goes all out for the holidays.

LIBRA (SEP. 23-OCT. 22): Nothing says "balanced breakfast" better than caffeine and sugar. Coffee cake doesn't actually have coffee in it, but you're supposed to drink your favorite brew when you eat it, lest you break decades of tradition or something. Have a slice next time you're pulling a dark-roast-fueled all-nighter, Libra. It might even balance out your final-exam-anxiety stomach ache.

DiverseU hosts lectures, discuss gender identity and free speech

In its 19th annual event, DiverseU promoted diversity and civil discourse with a series of lectures, films and art exhibits from Nov. 6-8. From gender to disability to free speech, the two day event brought staff, students and community members together to learn and share through a variety of platforms. Here are some highlights from the event.

ALLY TO ADVOCATE TO ACCOMPLICE: TWO UM ALUMNI DISCUSS THE IMPACT OF PROTESTING

Devin Carpenter made it clear that he and his co-presenter Logan Foret were not inciting people to cause violence or commit crimes but instead encouraging the audience to use protest to create change.

Creating disruptions is something they've been doing since their early years as undergraduate students at the University of Montana, protesting for change regarding issues and civic rights they care about. Identifying with the queer community, Carpenter and his friend Foret provided real-life examples and actions they have taken to drive impact.

"Whether we're trying to create cultural impact or just do something different. We really think outside the box," Foret said. "And that is a motto that [Carpenter] and I have really taken to heart when it comes to anything that we're doing."

Carpenter, director of new student success at the University and co-director of Missoula Pride alongside Foret said this discussion has no relation to their organization or employer.

"We're just two dudes up here talking about stuff we know a little bit about," Carpenter said.

Carpenter listed examples of protests and disruptions he has been involved in. He learned about a Day Without Art — a visual demonstration started Dec. 1, 1989, where art work is covered across the country to mourn and recognize lives lost to AIDS — and in 2021, took action by requesting to cover multiple pieces of art around Missoula.

Foret also talked about both legal and illegal actions he has taken to support his beliefs and values by causing disruptions on the University's campus and in Missoula. As an undergraduate when anti-abortion protests were happening on campus, he took to the free speech zone,

which was the area behind Main Hall at the time, to blast loud music, drowning out the protests.

Carpenter discussed the difference between being an ally, advocate and accomplice to the queer community.

"An ally is easily performed without much substance. It's slapping a bumper sticker on your car, it's putting the filter over your Facebook photo for two days, It's even just saying I voted," he said. "Well great, but what else have you done?"

Carpenter said the queer community needs and appreciates allies, but the next step is advocacy. He said advocates use their power and privilege to listen to a certain community and then provide that voice in a space where its not represented. But the next level is to bring that advocacy to what Foret and Carpenter call being an accomplice for these communities.

"To me, [an accomplice is] stepping down off your sort of platform of privilege to be standing arm in arm with those who are most vulnerable in this particular situation," Carpenter said. "An example would be standing arm in arm at the front of a Black Lives Matter protest as a white person."

Carpenter said Foret has been an accomplice to him, being the first to respond to potentially dangerous situations at Missoula Pride — a large event celebrating the LGBTQIA+ community in the Missoula area by creating a safe space for all genders and sexual identities — like when they confronted a person with a buck knife. While not being a part of the queer community himself, Foret has a passion to support the rights and changes needed for the LGBTQIA+ community.

"In my love for this person, my love for the people that we've done this event with has entirely changed my perspective," Foret said. "And I would absolutely call myself an activist now, and it's just based out of fucking love and respect for people I care about."

(Emily Messer)

A WORKSHOP FOR UNLEARNING: CHALLENGING THE GENDER BINARY

In a DiverseU presentation called "Navigating the Genderverse," participants were encouraged to engage in what the presentation called "unlearning" of the "absolute truths" society conditions people to believe about gender.

Dandilion Cloverdale, a presenter from Transvisible Montana, started their presentation with a land acknowledgement and spoke about the importance of cultural humility when discussing gender.

"It's important to talk about this acknowledgement, because respecting Indigenous sovereignty and honoring our traditions includes transgender, non-binary, Two-Spirit people," Cloverdale said. "These are actually traditions that have been here for a really long time, and we are reclaiming these identities as Indigenous people."

Two-Spirit is one of the traditional identities used in many Indigenous communities to describe Indigenous people who assume multiple gender roles, attributes, dress and attitudes for personal, spiritual, cultural, ceremonial or social reasons, according to Cloverdale.

They said gender identities such as Two-Spirit, were present on this continent before settlers came over, who viewed gender as binary, defining gender as male or female. Cloverdale said this shows the binary system of gender identification is not as unilateral as many believe.

Cloverdale highlighted some of the recent language people are using to incorporate more identities than simply man and woman, specifically in terms of pronouns. They explained the importance of incorporating more than two pronouns for individuals who identify as transgender, non-binary or Two-Spirit, and do not fit into the binary system.

"Pronouns are validating," Cloverdale said. "They say, 'I trust you to tell me who you are.' When you ask somebody their pronouns, or when they tell you their pronouns, they're telling you their truth."

Hannah Clark, 20, went to this presentation in order to broaden her perspective and prepare her to become a social worker.

"I want to work with all populations and all people who identify as all different things," Clark said.

Growing up on a military base, Clark said she witnessed resistance to the incorporation of the LGBTQIA+ population into the rankings of the military. She said gendered titles, such as sir or ma'am, which are used to speak to higher ranking members, are added to the difficulty.

One way to help with this, according

to Cloverdale, is to change the language that is used to address officers. Instead of sir or ma'am, using titles such as officer or captain can help bridge the divide.

Ultimately, Cloverdale said, the goal of their presentation was to try to break through the binary framework for gender and remind participants that this system does not accurately reflect everyone's experience.

They said the event was not to learn about gender and pronouns but rather to ask people to unlearn things that might have been taught as absolute truths. "These things that you might have been told are the only way for things to be, because we're here to tell you that there are other ways," Cloverdale said. "There are other truths out there."

(Emma White)



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SCAN ME

Embracing the lasting impacts and influences of Elouise Cobell

SAV CHAVEZ

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Students, faculty and community members joined hands on a brisk Tuesday afternoon for a round dance on the Oval dedicated to remembering Elouise Cobell and celebrating how her life's work still impacts Indigenous American college students even 13 years after her death.

In her 66 years of life, Cobell made a lasting impact on Indigenous communities across the nation following her win in the Cobell v. Salazar case — a win she never had the chance to see fully come to fruition as she succumbed to her battle with cancer a year after the settlement was approved.

Heading one of the largest class action lawsuits in American history, Cobell demanded for the end of mismanagement of trust funds on behalf of nearly half a million Indigenous Americans. As treasurer of the Blackfeet tribe and founder of the first Native American owned national bank, Cobell found that about 300,000 Individual Indian Money accounts had been receiving a fraction of the funds they were promised from revenues of leased land, oil, water and timber.

"I think of the 15 years she gave to us in righting the wrongs of what the U.S. Government gave to Native people. The mismanagement of our lands and the mismanagement of our funds, she worked to right these wrongs," Carol Juneau, an educator and American politician who served on Montana's legislation for many years, said.

Juneau, an enrolled member of the Three Affiliated Tribes, was invited to be this year's guest speaker, where she touched on the inspiring work Cobell did and shared stories Cobell told her.

After 14 years, the U.S. Department of the Interior negotiated a settlement of \$3.4 billion to be paid to account holders and created the American Indian Scholarship fund of up to \$60 million. The original settlement called for \$138 billion.

Elouise Cobell Day falls on Nov. 5 of every year, Cobell's birthday. In 2015, Montana Gov. Steve Bullock recognized this day as Elouise Cobell Day in recognition of her contributions to justice, Indigenous rights and financial transparency.

The day opened with a prayer and a performance of the victory song made for Cobell by Blackfeet tribal member Jay Dusty Bowl, and then the 50 attendees headed to the Oval to share a round dance, a dance that brings community together to celebrate and connect.

The events' coordinator Mikalen Running Fisher, is tied closely to the event as she is Cobell's great niece. She, along with the help of

her family, has been putting on the event every year since 2019.

"It helps us remember who we are," Running Fisher said. "It helps us state we are still here. We're celebrating important historic events like today."

Four students who have received support from the Cobell Scholarship spoke to the students of Two Eagles High School to share their experience, having been directly impacted by the work of Cobell.

"[If] I didn't receive any financial aid, everything would've been out of my pocket or out of my parent's pocket," Ronnel Goss, a member of the Blackfeet tribe who received \$5,000 from the scholarship, said. "I applied for the Cobell Scholarship, and I can tell you it's worth it. It was a long process, but you receive such a great amount."

The Cobell Scholarship is a nationwide scholarship designed to provide an opportunity for high achieving, community involved Native American college students with leadership experience to support their success in higher education, according to the Cobell Scholarship mission statement.

In the Payne Family Native American Center, the rotunda was filled with tables and chairs, all dressed in yellow to honor Cobell, whose Indigenous name was Yellow Bird Woman. Sharing conversation over a meal, Arlene Adams, one of the first Native American Studies graduates from the University of Montana, brought students from Two Eagle River High School for the chance to speak with faculty and scholarship recipients from the University of Montana.

Juneau spoke to the crowd following their lunch to celebrate the life and work of Cobell and honor her legacy by encouraging Indigenous students to continue their education and activism.

"Education was important to Cobell, especially financial education," Juneau said.

Running Fisher, a doctorate student studying cultural heritage and applied anthropology, finds the planning to be stressful, but always feels the event is rewarding when it arrives.

"Having Two Eagle River school come and see what it's about, hearing college students and speakers talk about their experience, it's really important. It really encourages them to understand what Cobell did, but also encourages them to become activists like she did," Running Fisher said.

She said she hopes the young students attending the event take the advice shared and apply it to their own lives by following in Cobell's footsteps or going home and educating their own families about who she was and what she did.

"We are the only institution in the state of Montana that actually holds an event in



Students of Two Eagle River High School participating in a round dance on the UM Oval for Elouise Cobell day.

DIEGO HERNANDEZ | MONTANA KAIMIN



Carol Juneau, a former member of the Montana House of Representatives and Senate, speaks to a crowd gathered in The Payne Family Native American Center about Elouise Cobell's legacy on Nov. 5.

DIEGO HERNANDEZ | MONTANA KAIMIN

remembrance of Elouise," Running Fisher said. "Personally, as a family member, this day is so important to celebrate and remember, to let her legacy live on in the community, in Native American children, Native American communities."

Before the departure of the students of Two Eagle River High, the students shared a final

round dance and the echoing of singing inside the Payne Family Native American Center could be heard from the center of campus. This was the final moment of celebration on a day that continues to influence Indigenous Americans across the country to strive for greatness as Cobell did for many years of her life.

From bookworm to boxer

ROLLER DERBY'S UNIQUE HISTORY AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOUNG WOMEN

Story by Hannah Benitez
Photos by Aiden Havens

Behind a cardboard divider in the back of a thrift store sat a handmade, dimly lit roller rink. As I slowly made my way to the makeshift arena, the quiet eeriness was punctured by the excited screams of teenage girls.

I heard delight in their yelling as they got ready for practice. As someone who has always had a fraught history with sports, it was exactly what I was looking for.

The small thrift store off North Avenue in Missoula provides a home for a sport filled with a groundbreaking, complex and inspiring history, especially for female athletes and young women. Beyond all of the larger ideas swirling in the quirky misshapen place, the rink exists as a unique way for young girls to express themselves without holding back.

While I haven't heard many 14-year-

olds needing to worry about paying off student loans, it soon became clear that we were drawn to this place for very similar reasons.

Before practice, I laced up my skates with some of the girls and talked about why they chose roller derby. Every time I got the same response: "It makes me feel at home."

It's easy to relate to that desire for belonging even now. I have just arrived for my first year at the University of Montana, miles away from my hometown in North Carolina, navigating this new world all alone. Besides, I could put myself in their skates. My first day of high school was not too long ago.

I remember walking through the doors and realizing these next four years were going to define who I am and who I will become, the same overwhelming ideas I was confronted with when my parents dropped me off at Knowles Hall. The

four years I will spend at college are monumental and they'll dictate how the rest of my life will go.

As I watched these girls interact with one another at the rink, it reminded me of when I was their age. Like them, I turned to sports, hoping I'd finally find something I could enjoy without being told I wasn't "girly enough" or that "it's only for boys."

As a kid I played pretty traditional sports — soccer, dance, gymnastics — but they never worked out. I was terrified of getting injured. Breaking a bone was one of my biggest fears. So I stuck to things that were more academic. I was president of the Latin Club and spent most of my time studying for upcoming Advanced Placement exams. What could be less dangerous than that?

As the girls started to skate out onto the rink, their love of the sport was obvious. They fell and got back up without fear of weakness. They got body checked and

shouldered on. They weren't embarrassed when they messed up. Roller derby is a niche sport, but it was clear it provided a creative and often gritty outlet for the players.

It was exciting to see these young kids starting to understand that they didn't have to be the best to have fun, a concept I still struggle with.

One of my biggest regrets from high school was never stepping outside my comfort zone. I never tried many hobbies besides a few school clubs, most of which I joined simply because they looked good on a college application.

As I sat on the bench at the rink with my gear, I was terrified I was going out there just to have these girls skate laps around me. I hadn't been to a skating rink since I was 11 — it's safe to say I couldn't skate whatsoever.

But I took one more look at the tough, screaming teenage girls. I wanted a taste of

me-crusher



LEFT: #3, game name Chicken Nugget, escapes a jam where the other team tries to block the skater from completing the lap for a point on Oct. 25. **MIDDLE:** Skaters of the Witches Juniors Hellgate Roller Derby Team watch and tell jokes waiting to get their time on the track. **RIGHT:** #68, game name Graycon the Destroyer, skates through the other team's defense to try and make a lap around the track.

that confidence and joy.

So I laced up my skates, put on my pads and hoped for the best.

What it means to skate

Like the studious AP exam bookworm I was, I tackled this experiment in roller derby like I had so many things in life. I did my homework.

One of the competitions I attended for research was the Hellgate Roller Derby's annual Brawl'o'ween event at the Missoula Fairgrounds. It was held at yet another makeshift arena and featured skaters dressed up and competing for fun, with no ultimate title to win.

While both teams consisted mostly of women, a few men played on the teams, a clear reflection of the history and origins of derby.

The sport was originally created as a mixed-gender sport in 1930, but it wouldn't be until nearly 30 years later in the 1960s and '70s when the sport began to prominently feature women.

And even then it faced typical misogynistic criticisms. In 1971, sportswriter Frank Deford wrote a book on roller derby called "Five Strides on the Banked Track," which featured well-known characters in the sport. However, only two women made it into the book.

Deford viewed the inclusion of women as a distraction, writing that "there is no doubt that it is the women who give the

game its tawdry, sideshow image." In his eyes people came to see the women play, but "stayed to enjoy the faster, harder men's play."

But since then, the sport has made major strides in equality for all sexualities, genders and races. RollerCon, a worldwide roller derby convention, surveyed attendees in 2019 and found nearly 50% of those in attendance were women and only 10% were men. The Women's Flat Track Derby Association, the international governing body for women's derby, has repeatedly emphasized that non-binary athletes and transgender women can play on women's derby teams, and several other national and international derby organizations have diversity and inclusion plans.

The turnout for Brawl'o'ween was larger than I expected. There were people in attendance who had no ties to the game or those who held a roster spot, but who wanted to support a local event and have some fun while doing it.

As the first races began, I could see the appeal. Roller derby is a sport where the main attraction is contact — something everyone craves. Why do you think football is considered America's sport? Because people love violence.

But as you watch closely — skaters weaving in and out, trying to escape the jammers — it's hard not to see it as beautiful.

First up, the junior team. Given their youth, I was ready for some sleepy laps. But I was surprised at how fiercely the

teenage girls drove in elbows and zipped around the rink.

I watched as these kids, some as young as 10, pushed each other around, literally shoving one another until their faces collided with the ground. The medic, aptly named flatline, quickly became busy.

Through the violence, however, it was impossible not to see the community they had built.

It was touching to see, especially when considering how often women are pitted against one another for frivolous things: how much we weigh, how we dress, how much money we do or don't make, who we date. I can't count the number of times I've looked at other women around me and thought "If only I acted or looked more like her, then I would be happier." But there was none of that in the rink. Instead I saw excited kids cheering their teams on and helping each other whenever one of them fell down.

As I was watching the players skate to the bench and celebrate with their teammates, it was clear how strong their connection was. As someone who is experiencing their first time living alone, I couldn't help but crave that bond.

I found myself pondering, thinking how a roller derby team could be beneficial for the University of Montana and its residents. As part of my quest I met up with Michaela "Dr. Brawlipop" Shifley and Laura "Angry Bird" Bird, both of who work for the University when they aren't brawling it out in the rink.

"It would be great for UM to have a roller derby team, even if it's just a club sport. It's a unique experience for students," Shifley said. "The thing about roller derby is that it attracts people who didn't fit into the mainstream sports world, and it's very accepting of everyone."

Bird said a connection to the University could not only support future derby athletes, but help the program as well.

"Our current practice rink has no heat or running water. We need a better space to practice. It would be a great outlet for students to manage stress and get some exercise," Bird said. "Any support from the University would be appreciated."

In between games, I was able to talk to Magda "Major Magditude" Dowlan, the coach for the juniors team.

"The best thing is that they are all so different — misfits coming together," Dowlan said. Almost everyone I talked to used this expression, calling the players "misfits," and this truly spoke to me. Growing up, I always felt out of place, feeling as though I have to change myself to fit this cookie-cutter life.

I now realize how important and liberating it is to just be myself and embrace the weirdness. It's something I



Referees of the Hellgate Roller Derby discuss a penalty on Oct. 25 at the Ravalli County Fairgrounds.

wish I had learned at their age.

But I still had reservations. It had been so long since I broke out of my shell, and I couldn't help but still feel out of place. As I was sitting there, watching these girls jab and shove each other, I started to wonder: What have I gotten myself into?

Enter Hurricane Hannah

As I entered the small locker room with my hands sweaty from the nerves, I started to question if I could even pull this off, even after meeting with the coaches and asking, begging, for any help they could provide me with.

As I wobbled out onto the padded floor, we started with some simple warmups — well, simple for people who know how to skate, but ludicrously hard for me. I found my skates embarrassingly moving backward in a slow-motion train crash

fashion while I tried to balance on one foot.

After warmups, my nerves spiked. I now had to actually skate. I started to shimmy my way around, focusing on just trying to stay upright.

All I wanted was to avoid falling down, but those hopes were quickly dashed. Within the first 30 seconds of me wobbling around, I fell flat on my back. Instantly, I was transported to all the other times in my life when I'd fallen, failed and felt embarrassed.

Once again I was 4 years old, playing soccer with my dad as the coach, and never letting go of his hand because I was petrified. I was the younger me in gymnastics, falling off the small beam and immediately running to my mom and refusing to ever get back on the beam.

But that was the old me. I just kept reminding myself of what my parents had told me: I'll get through this and there's

nothing to be afraid of.

I got up and kept skating.

It took a while, but I slowly began to pick up my feet and successfully completed a few strides. I'd like to think I looked like a swan, gliding through the water, but if I'm honest, I probably looked more like the runt of the pack, trying to keep up with everyone else.

As I rode the bus back to campus after the first practice, I thought about how little I wanted to go back to the rink. But I kept reminding myself that those teenagers were also once in my position. They were once a new skater, an anxious young woman, trying to find themselves a spot on the team.

Before returning to my dorm, I made a quick pit stop at the dining hall with my tupperware container, picking up some ice for the bruises. I called my mother to ask if she could order me a heating pad for my shoulders.



The medic kit at the Juniors Hellgate Roller Derby was used multiple times to address injuries of the players ranging from cuts and scrapes to multiple head bumps on the cement ground.

When I told my roommate about my new hobby, she was confused. As I recounted the falls and bruises, I felt like a soldier recounting their times at war.

But looking back at that first practice, I also saw how accepting those girls were. The teenage girls I remember would never be so embracing of an awkward, strange older woman struggling to stay upright.

Some even tried to help with advice when skating, including teaching me how to land properly or how to gain enough momentum on one foot in order to easily glide across the floor.

The day after practice, I limped around my tiny dorm room trying to get ready for my early morning classes. I had to change how I slept because my back hurt too much. I felt like a grandma with my aching muscles and terrible back pain.

By the time the next practice day rolled around, I still didn't want to get on the bus and go back to the rink. But I knew the team and the girls were expecting me. I knew they would be disappointed if I simply gave up. It might also have helped that I promised myself a sweet treat afterward. So I got onto the bus and rode it all the way to the rink.

A surprising thing happened during the first after an hour of practice. I could feel myself improving with some basic skating techniques. I was able to skate around the rink, but still couldn't turn and stopped whenever I hit a corner as I was yet to perfect my crossovers. But at the very least I could go forward and backward.

Day after day, I kept going back. Soon, I was skating without any falls. I moved from the runt of the pack to a higher position, feeling like I had accomplished so much. I was even considering buying

myself some skates to make my campus commute that much easier.

For a while, I even started imagining winning a spot on the team roster. I realized, however, that they actually wanted to win games and that death-by-roller derby would be a horrible way for my obituary to start. So I decided it would be best if I sat on the sidelines.

Even off the rink, however, I felt grateful for the gifts those girls had given me.

I grew up as a girl who loves sports, despite my lack of skills in them. I remember so often being told that "I only liked sports because I wanted to impress men" or that I was becoming a "pick-me girl." I even remember telling someone my favorite hockey player and all I got in response was: "Is it because you think he's hot?"

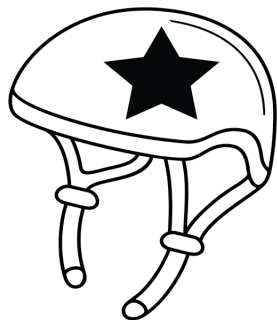
When I became a sports writer in college, I was similarly frustrated and disappointed with its overly male workforce, and couldn't help but feel unwanted.

But when I stepped into the roller derby rink and talked with those girls, I got to see what derby meant to them. It gave them an outlet where they can be the dominant force.

While I believe that we should all be equal, I can't deny that it feels great for women to have a sport that is their own and isn't seen as just a dumbed-down, diluted version of another male-dominated sport.

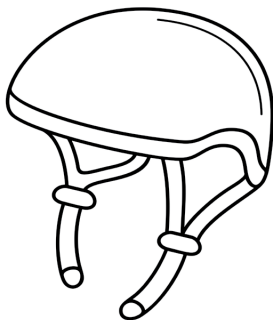
Roller derby rules

There are three main positions in roller derby: the jammer, the pivot and the blockers. They can be identified by their helmet covers.



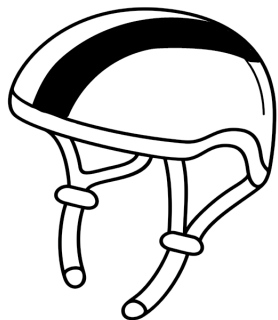
Jammer

- Star helmet cover. Their job is to score points by passing opposing players. The number of points corresponds to the number of players they pass.



Blockers

- No helmet cover. There are three blockers on the rink at any given time, and they form a triangle to try and stop the opposing jammer from scoring.



Pivot

- Helmet cover with a strip, but if given the jammer's helmet cover, they can switch roles. They also help the jammer by boosting them past blockers.

- Each game lasts about an hour, divided into two halves of 30 minutes. During the halves, there are "jams." The objective of the jam is to score as many points as possible, but if the jammer does not pass the initial lap, then no points are banked for the team.
- The first jammer who passes the initial lap first becomes the lead jammer and can call off the jam at any time. If they don't stop the jam, it lasts for two minutes.
- While contact is a major aspect of roller derby, there are rules for where contact can occur. Players can only make contact with the chest, arms, or hips. If they make contact outside these zones, they're sent to the "sin bin," or penalty box.

It was inspiring to see these girls embrace something outside the norm of what is considered trendy or popular. It showed me that I don't need to be ashamed of how I am living my own life and that I don't need to be the cookie-cutter girl that everyone likes.

I may no longer be in high school, but I confess I still struggle with comparing myself to the other girls around me and the other girls I see online. As women we are constantly comparing ourselves and being compared to one another, whether we know it or not.

While I have officially retired from roller

derby, I now consider myself a lover and an ambassador for the sport.

One great thing about roller derby is that no player is confined to a single position. Unlike other sports, there's no competition to be the best at any one role. No one is racking up points for personal stats, everyone is simply working together to secure the victory.

That's the kind of team I want to belong to, and one that I'm rooting hard for.

How women's friendships can provide healing and support

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In a world full of challenges, the bond between women is a source of empowerment, comfort and healing. Especially today, this solidarity feels more urgent as we face complex issues like reproductive rights, societal expectations and evolving gender roles.

Women's friendships have become more than just companionship — they're lifelines, pushing back against a society that often tries to limit us. In these spaces, we don't just deal with personal challenges; we find the strength to challenge systems that try to define us. Now more than ever, women should be bonding together and having one another's backs.

For many women, friendships serve as essential lifelines. Studies in Psychology Today show female friendships can improve mental and physical health by reducing stress, boosting oxytocin levels and providing crucial emotional support. Research from the University of California suggests that women under stress are biologically inclined to "tend and befriend," creating close-knit friendships that relieve the effects of stress and anxiety.

Jessie McCafferty, a licensed clinical professional counselor, said friendships between women offer something unique. "There's a level of intimacy and acceptance that's different with women," she said. "We create space to talk openly without judgment."

Busy schedules and life responsibilities can make it challenging to meet in person, but McCafferty emphasized that women find ways to stay connected. "We make time to check in with each other, whether it's through voice memos or just texting. Those small moments matter," she said.

For students like Anna Thomas, a 21-year-old environmental studies major

at the University of Montana, female friendships provide a vital sense of comfort. "It's comforting to know I'm not alone," she said. "In today's world, when you're going through struggles, it's helpful to have friends who get it."

For Thomas, these friendships have been especially crucial during times when her mental health has been challenged. "Women face a lot of pressure. But having friends who understand makes a big difference in staying grounded," Thomas said.

Similarly, Sawyer Unruh, a 19-year-old English literature major, finds strength in the women around her. "Having friends who encourage me helps me realize I don't have to compare myself to anyone," she said. These friendships remind Unruh of her worth, teaching her to embrace her individuality in a world that often pressures women to conform.

Friendships allow people to express

and process our feelings freely. "We're not afraid to admit when we don't have the emotional bandwidth to listen. That honesty is what makes these relationships strong," McCafferty said.

Thomas also emphasized the importance of checking in on one another. "It's so important to remind each other that it's okay to take a break," she said. "We're always looking out for one another's mental health."

Unruh, too, feels empowered by her friends. "They help me stay focused on what really matters — staying true to myself and not comparing myself to anyone

else," she said. These friendships remind her that personal growth doesn't have to follow someone else's timeline or expectations.

Friendships can provide a foundation for women to feel seen, heard and supported — especially in times of uncertainty. These bonds are more than just a way to pass the time. They're powerful tools for healing, empowerment, and resilience. When women come together to support each other, they can create a space where anything is possible. As McCafferty puts it, "When women support each other, there's no limit to what we can do."



Ruby Hoesl waits for the Women's March to begin, listening to the organizers outline the event from next to her mom, Vanessa.

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'BINGO!': Play explores love, loss and leaving the closet

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As commanded by Lula Mae Johnson's last will and testament, a memorial game of bingo will be played at the Missoula Senior Center, and the prize is her entire estate. More than just the ample monetary winnings, players win self-acceptance and understanding.

The intergenerational experience of queer people isn't always represented in popular media, but Montana Repertory Theatre's newest production "BINGO!" explores what it means to be a closeted queer person, young and old alike, in our community.

Michael Legg, director of "BINGO!" and artistic director of the Montana Repertory Theatre, commissioned four queer playwrights from across the country to create a piece of theater that showcases what a life spent in silence can do for closeted people — and what a difference support can make

"I just wanted more gay stuff," Legg said.

In the play, Lula Mae Johnson, a fictional, celebrated Missoula philanthropist and ferocious bingo fanatic, has died. Honoring her final wish, her memorial service takes place during the regular bingo night at the Missoula Senior Center. The audience is invited to join Johnson's long-time roommate and her bingo-calling nephew in a game of bingo with pieces of her estate up for grabs as a prizes, including inheritance money. The long-time "roommate," played by local actor and UM alumni Ann Peacock, and her nephew Jeffrey, played by current student Monroe Ayers, are both struggling with coming out and having their relationships be public.

Legg intentionally commissioned the four playwrights to create a piece of theater that is completely centered around queer people and relationships. In Legg's view, positive queer representation is very important.

"I just so happen to be in the position where I get to decide what stories we tell," Legg said. "So I'm going to tell queer stories."

In the play, Jeffrey struggles to be out about his relationship with his boyfriend Anthony, especially with his mother. Anthony, an out and proud gay man, wants their relationship to be public. He is no longer comfortable with the compromise of being called his boyfriend in private and friend in public.

Octavio Jimenez, who plays Anthony, wants the play to be an affirmation: "It's



Octavio Jimenez, on the left, and Monroe Ayers rehearse their dance number for "Bingo!" at a practice session in McGill Hall on Nov. 7.

DIEGO HERNANDEZ | MONTANA KAIMIN

okay to be who you are." Jimenez identifies as queer and believes that telling the play's story is extremely important for people who need to hear the message.

"Hell, I was in denial for so long. I would ask the most obvious questions and even when the answer was 'yes,' I'd be like, 'no, that's not me though,'" Jimenez said.

He hopes people who aren't accepting of LGBTQIA+ people will buy tickets so the show can hopefully open their eyes to what different types of true love can look like.

Monroe Ayers, a 23-year-old in their senior year of the musical theater program, believes the play highlights safe spaces for queer-identifying people. In the play, Johnson is such a pillar of the community that her home and the bingo hall serve as a safe space for everyone.

Ayers said not everywhere is a safe space for queer people. "The story that I think we're really trying to tell is the importance of those safe spaces," Ayers said. "And in

doing so, I think it strives to make another safe space."

Legg and one of his commissioned playwrights, Paul Kruse, cooked up the idea for the play. They both were talking about what it means to be queer in a small town, and Legg brought up his own experiences. Being from a small town in east Tennessee, Legg had a hard time living openly as queer. When he came out as a young adult, two older women took him in and accepted him for who he was. Those two women who lived together were never physically affectionate in public. They didn't talk about their relationship.

"So Paul and I started talking about that. What would it mean if that was how you felt, you had to live?" Legg said.

Legg also loves bingo and remembers his parents often taking him to play. Thus, "BINGO!" was born. Now in the final stages of development, the play has been reworked throughout the rehearsal process to include

dance and music. The Theatre is collaborating with local musician Josh Farmer and local dance company Kinetic Convergence Dance Collective to make the production happen.

According to Legg, part of the theater company's ethos is representation. He wants to showcase people's true stories on stage and plans to continue telling those stories as long as he is able.

"If I had seen a positive representation of an out gay man when I was younger, my entire life would be different," Legg said.

Performances will run from Nov. 15-24 at the Missoula Senior Center. Visit <https://www.tix.com/ticket-sales/mtrep/6466> for more information. Due to a donation by Northwestern Energy, tickets are available as Pick-What-You-Pay. "BINGO!" is rated PG-13 for adult language and adult themes.

The reality of student athlete deals at UM

RILEY COMSTOCK

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The era of Name, Image and Likeness deals has drastically changed the world of college sports, taking it from an amateur sports league where students get to play for their university to an organization where athletes receive schooling.

While this reality hasn't quite transformed University of Montana athletics, its repercussions are reverberating through college athletics at a rapid rate.

Past deals at UM

Marcus Welnel started playing football at UM in 2017. After redshirting his freshman year, he went on to be a dependable, play-making linebacker for the Griz. Originally from Helena, he finished his college football career in the 2022 season and earned the coveted #37 alongside a great Montana defense. The 37 jersey is handed down year-to-year to a player from the state that represents the "Spirit of Montana" through hard work and dedication.

Welnel pursued two masters' degrees at UM, a Master of Arts in business administration and a Master of Science in business analytics. Now, he works as a financial advisor at SG Long Financial in Missoula and is the general manager for UM's Name, Image and Likeness collective, the Good Ol' Grizzlies.

Welnel's experience for this position was not just born out of his athletic experience with the Griz. When the potential to create deals was first allowed by the NCAA in 2021, he was an early pioneer at UM and went looking for them himself. During his second masters, he did a capstone on Name, Image and Likeness development.

"I quickly realized we needed something at the University to help student athletes realize and kind of monetize their NIL," Welnel said.

The collectives are a sort of third party agency that allows marketing and relations with businesses looking to engage in deals with student athletes. By doing so through a non-university entity, UM avoids the now classic tactic of universities recruiting athletes through endorsement deals.

"We help provide opportunities for student athletes but then also help businesses understand how they can utilize the student athletes at the University of



Marcus Welnel, the general manager of UM's NIL Collective, Good Ol' Grizzlies, enjoys the view of his downtown office. JAMES BENTON | MONTANA KAIMIN

Montana to work with their marketing initiatives," Welnel said. "We are kind of the conduit between athletes and business and donors."

While the collective is advancing opportunities for UM students, the University does not, however, have the world of endorsement deals figured out.

"In this evolving world of Name, Image and Likeness you just have to. We want to keep our best athletes here and so we are going to have to start paying them," Welnel said. Good Ol' Grizzlies currently allows those athletes to make money without the University paying them directly.

Legal complications

The advent of Name, Image and Likeness began in 2021 when the NCAA finally allowed college athletes to enter into promotional deals and receive compensation for advertising for the use of their name, image and likeness. Student athletes at UM have endorsed politicians, car dealerships and apparel, among others. In the early days, it was a sort of lawless land.

"When NIL started, there was not a single rule in the rulebook about NIL. It was all guidelines," Jean Gee, the senior associate athletic director at the University, said. Gee deals with NCAA rules compliance

across the board and about one-fifth of her job is dealing with NIL rule compliance.

In the time between the NCAA permitting the deals in July 2021 and the passing of the official legislation that now governs them in August 2024, schools were essentially on their own when dealing with rules. Some states had passed laws governing the deals, some hadn't. Montana did not and so Gee and the athletics department were left interpreting the rough guidelines to develop its own rulebook.

While the University has a more concrete endorsement deal policy now, the legal trouble grinds on. In the national spotlight is the House v. NCAA Settlement, which is a \$2.8 billion settlement that would retroactively pay student athletes who file a claim.

"It provides back damages to student athletes who were not allowed to do NIL for the last 10 years," Kent Haslam, UM's athletic director, said.

The class action lawsuit bundles several suits filed across the country regarding how the NCAA barred student athlete compensation in certain ways. In effect, it takes three separate suits with various complaints and brings it all before a single judge.

While former Griz athletes can certainly file claims after the suit is decided next

year, they are unlikely to receive a check.

"We are anticipating that there will be no payments to anyone that played in the FCS, or in the Big Sky conference, primarily it will go to Power Five schools' student athletes," Haslam said.

Even though former Griz players are unlikely to receive a payout, the Griz will still lose money. UM will miss out on about \$220,000 in revenue sharing each year for the next 10 years.

In September, Montana Gov. Greg Gianforte said the settlement would have "a devastating" impact on rural states athletic programs. South Dakota's Board of Regents have also filed a lawsuit alleging the settlement favors larger universities unfairly.

The University receives "revenue distribution," as Haslam described it, from the NCAA from profits it makes in big tournaments, like March Madness, and from the number of scholarships offered. Instead of the University cutting a check, it will simply receive less in these payouts. While the NCAA will pay a significant portion of the suit, some Division I institutions will likely see more payout than their former athletes will receive.

The lawsuit does establish a ban on "pay for play," according to a NCAA statement. If passed, this would prohibit deals that simply pay an athlete to play at a certain school. With the huge collectives at some schools, this has become a problem.

"There are stories every single day about NIL transactions to get an athlete to sign with a certain school," Gee said. "That's challenging for me as a professional because I want this program to be successful, and having our program be successful is complying with the rules."

While Gee works diligently to make sure the University stays above board with its deals, the competitive and profit-driven nature that has started to dominate college athletics, and which the settlement seeks to ban, makes it all the more difficult.

"It makes it hard to stand in front of my head coaches and say, 'We can't do this,'" Gee said. "Having identified that as a challenge, we have a group of coaches that believe in that too and don't want to get into the gray area of the rules."

The settlement lets universities share profits with athletes.

"Moving forward, it allows universities to share up to \$22 million in revenue, with that amount increasing each year with

student athletes,” Haslam said.

While the University stands to lose money, endorsement deals for athletes are harder to judge. One added complexity of judging the NIL market is the fact that athletes are not required to publicly disclose their deals, making it hard to track the true market.

Athletes are only required to disclose the name of the entity, actions of the deal and the amount if the deal is over \$600. Nothing is required to be released publicly, but at the University of Montana, these aspects are disclosed to the NCAA and Gee.

“Prior to August, the institutional involvement was pretty much not allowed at all,” Gee said. “In this new era since August, there is quite a bit more institutional involvement allowed. We can actually help our student athletes find NIL opportunities and be much more involved in those transactions.”

While the NCAA has records of these deals, the data is not available to the public. The deals are private between a business and an athlete. This is what creates a gray market for NIL recruitment with larger schools.

Endorsement deals cannot simply be an enticement for students to play for a certain school. They must be a “quid pro quo” arrangement, as Gee put it.

However, with Power Five schools having millions in donor money, the NIL collective side of this world can make huge offers to athletes in return for their attendance. With a highly competitive market of rankings and the fall off of the amateur model of college athletics, the reality of Name, Image and Likeness is more along pro leagues than at a college level.

Endorsement deals at large

Power Five schools have, for a time, operated with the facade of an amateur team. But with coaches sometimes earning more than college presidents, like Clemson football coach Dabo Swinney who makes around \$11 million a season, Power Five schools are closer to the level of franchise than college athletics. Power Five schools are universities that are part of the top five collegiate football conferences in the country. Some notable teams include the Ohio State Buckeyes, Alabama Crimson Tide, Michigan Wolverines and Duke Blue Devils.

The legalization of player monetization opened the floodgates for massive amounts of money to pour into one of America’s great pastimes. Some college stars and media sensations can make millions from their deals.



Cooper Barnum, a linebacker for the Griz, has an NIL deal with Elkhorn dog chews. NIL in collegiate athletics has changed drastically in the last several years. **MARLEY BARBOEISEL | MONTANA KAIMIN**

The website ON3 ranks college athletes in classes and categories and lists disclosed endorsement deals. Its “NIL 100” list ranks athletes by the valuations of their deals. Shedeur Sanders, quarterback for the recently rebranded Colorado Buffaloes, holds the number one spot with an evaluation of \$6.2 million, primarily off his deals with Nike and Beats by Dre. Close behind is Tik Tok star and Louisiana State University gymnast Olivia Dunne who is valued at \$4 million through various deals with clothing and promotion brands.

While this upper end is more well known, it isn’t the reality of many programs. The national atmosphere of endorsement deals has left some athletes rich and some unaffected. At the University of Montana, the reality seems to be different.

While endorsement deals for top playmakers on UM rosters can create comfortable earnings, they are not making the million dollar deals of the Southeastern Conference and the Big 10 Conference.

“I think we still attract athletes here that are coming to be a college student,” Gee said. “To get to this level where you suddenly decide you’re going to redshirt and where you transfer to is going to be the highest bidder, I don’t see us getting to that level.”

Endorsement deals at Montana

While Welnel works as the general manager for Good Ol’ Grizzlies, he is technically employed through Student Athlete

Name, Image and Likeness, a national marketing agency that helps these deals see success. The agency represents schools across the country.

The agency is just one of many that help schools manage the complex world of monetizing student athletes. And at Montana, Good Ol’ Grizzlies is not the only way these deals get made.

Gee said beside direct advertisement deals, the University has several other avenues for which student athletes can monetize themselves.

One option is through the Griz NIL Exchange, which is an online venue that allows businesses to connect directly with athletes through an online portal. Another is through a group called BrandR, which allows student athletes to use their name, image and likeness alongside the Griz logo.

BrandR essentially allows students to make money from sales of their jerseys with their names on them. These deals don’t make a lot of money, said Gee, but they do allow students to not miss out.

While Gee says the majority of deals go through Good Ol’ Grizzlies, other venues are important ways for athletes to monetize their athletics careers.

Welnel sees these routes as a positive direction for student athletes, and it’s making up for a long history of its prohibition in college athletics.

“The amount of publicity and revenue it drives for the city of Missoula and the University, the athletes in the past really got nothing for that,” Welnel said.

And while the atmosphere of collegiant endorsement deals nationally is charged and tense, he sees it as slightly more relaxed in Missoula.

“I think at this level you’re still seeing a lot of athletes going to colleges just cause they love the college and they love the opportunity,” Welnel said.

The reality of lots of athletes’ brand experiences is closer to that of Cooper Barnum. A senior in his second year with the Griz football team after transferring from playing baseball at Washington State University, Barnum is one of the few Griz athletes with a partially disclosed endorsement deal on the website ON3.

Barnum is a linebacker for the Griz and has a brand deal with Elkhorn dog chews. Ryan Featherstone, the owner and a former number 37 himself, initially started working with the Lady Griz. Barnum has a dog and Featherstone set him up with some dog chews and merchandise.

“Around here you see a lot of guys reach out to companies on their own and schedule deals and it’s all for something,” Barnum said. “The top guys are getting a little change in their pocket.”

It’s not all big brand deals like the Power Five schools see. Even the top athletes at the University of Montana are mostly working with local businesses and receiving money from advertising for them. Barnum said he loves to see Griz stars on Lithia Ford commercials. He sees playmakers like wide receiver Junior Bergen as the real earners of these deals.

“He gets fans to the game, he’s making plays, he’s the ‘wow’ factor, he deserves that money,” Barnum said. “I think in that part it’s beneficial, to benefit the players who are having a big impact for fans and money and ticket sales.”

While Barnum is appreciative of the opportunities and hopeful for how the University will develop, he acknowledges the shortfalls of the concept at large.

“It’s a tough world right now,” Barnum said. “It’s gonna hurt the FCS schools because they don’t have as much money to offer kids.”

Regardless of the overall state of brand deals and how it affects athletes at large, Barnum still has to focus on the team and his relationships with the other players. The reality of endorsements in college has changed drastically in the last several years, but it doesn’t seem to have affected the culture at the University of Montana too much.

“This team is very humble, we have a lot of guys who understand where people come from,” Barnum said. “I don’t think it changes how we look at each other.”

Collegiate casting

Photos and words by **RACHEL YEAGER**
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As final voters hit the polls and election workers neared the end of their long day, all of America was feeling the tension of the election. Workers and volunteers arrived on Nov. 5 at 5:30 a.m. to start their day at the polls. Most would think spending their entire day at the polling station as long, but not Bill Buseman. Buseman has been working as an election official for the past 20 years and loves the experience every time.

"I want to be part of a process that I'm passionate about," Buseman said. "The whole process, and the whole feeling of everything that leads up to the election, it's very patriotic."

From helping voters drop their ballot into the box to tallying the votes at the end of the night, Buseman said he thinks it wouldn't be fair of him to not participate in something he feels so passionately about.

Every four years, the community comes together, whether they agree with each other's

opinions or not, to do their part and vote. The shared commitment to public participation remains a powerful force in ensuring that all voices are heard. For some, balancing work and school with voting can be a challenge.

"I considered not voting today, but it just made my skin crawl," said Jared Salls, a senior from Vermont studying integrated physiology.

Though Tuesdays are his busiest day of the week, Salls found time to vote after finishing his classes and work.

"It feels good. It feels like I'm doing my duty as an American citizen," Salls said.

Salls, like many voters, sees casting a ballot as a small but important act of civic engagement. No matter who you voted for, or which party you are a part of, at the end of the day, the community comes together to do their civic duty and exercise their right to vote.



TOP RIGHT: Lila Virostko drops her ballot into the box at the polling station on campus on Nov. 5.

BOTTOM RIGHT: A woman receives her ballot from a precinct worker during election day in Missoula.

BOTTOM LEFT: Voting stickers are displayed on the welcome table, where workers and volunteers sit to answer any voting questions.

