

MONTANA KAIMIN



STORY BY ELLE DANIEL
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BENEATH THE CLAPP BUILDING HIDES A TREASURE TROVE OF BONES, AND WITH THEM, THE LONE COLLECTIONS MANAGER KEEPING PALEONTOLOGY FROM GOING EXTINCT AT UM.

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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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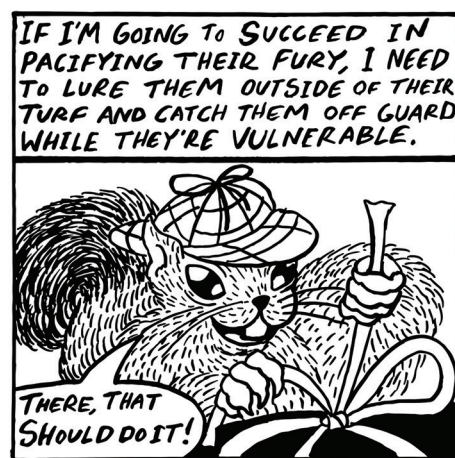
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KAIMIN KOMICS: SE 3 EP 2



- BARRETT
2025

BARRETT CLEMENT | CARTOONIST @FUNNYFERRETSTUDIOS

BARRETT

To be cringe is to be free

In my 21 years on Earth I've learned a lot of useful things. How to pay my taxes. How to parallel park. What to drink — or not to drink — so I don't have a hangover the next day. Out of all those very important lessons, one has proven to be the most valuable: to be cringe is to be free.

In middle school, I was cringe. I loved to watch anime and I never shut up about it. I wore cat ears and sang songs from Hamilton in the school hallways. I was not subtle. The popular kids definitely made fun of me. As I walked down the hallways at school, I heard whispers about what I was wearing and what I was doing. I was pretty well known, but not for something cool.

When I mean cringe, I mean any action that is conventionally perceived as weird, embarrassing or corny. Some popular examples: liking "My Little Pony," being a

furry, cosplaying and showing true emotional vulnerability.

Humans have been emotionally vulnerable since the beginning of time. "Evolutionary history has hammered in us a need for community, considering how lone prehistoric men died alone and survived in packs. Over time, this morphed into a rejection of those who did not adhere to arbitrary social norms — and the cringe is a symptom of anticipating that rejection," author Melissa Dahl said in her book, Cringeworthy. The book, subtitled "The theory of awkwardness," explores what makes us cringe and why.

The reason why we cringe is purely self-preservation. When we get embarrassed, that feeling is similar to a fear response. We're afraid of losing social standing in the same way we are afraid of being in danger. We want to avoid that feeling as much as possible, so when we witness something cringeworthy, our

body reacts negatively. Whether scrunching up our shoulders up or laughing nervously or saying "Ew," cringing is different for everyone.

A 2022 research journal on embarrassment by Carina Kill and Zeynep Toprakbasti suggested that this pain empathy response holds not only for physical pain, but also emotional distress, like that experienced when watching someone else go through something embarrassing. Today, this phenomenon is called second-hand embarrassment. If a waiter drops a stack of plates in a restaurant, the people watching may not endure the embarrassment first hand, but, because of these highly-empathetic neural regions, still feel embarrassment.

I know being made fun of sucks. That feeling of doing something you love and someone hating on it isn't unfamiliar to me. Despite that, I kept doing what I wanted and I was way happier because of it. I still watch anime. I'm still a huge theater kid. The only thing that changed? I outgrew the cat ears. Even though I still do stereotypically cringe things, I'm happy because I'm not confined to those lame arbitrary boundaries.

That's why this week's issue is a celebration of loving your passions, from ren faires to bones to bare feet.

Be free. Stop caring about what other people think. Just do what makes you happy. Even if it is cringe. Life is severely too short. Every day brings more news of people dying and of tragedies happening. Why should we spend our short time on earth doing only what is expected of us? I can't think of a better way to spend my time than doing the things I love.

What's the worst thing that could happen? You'll be embarrassed, sure. You'll get that familiar feeling of cringe. But instead of giving into it, try taking a deep breath and shaking it off. You might find the cringe is over just as quick as it came.

You'll have done what makes you happy. You're free and truly yourself. You spent your valuable, limited time doing something authentic instead of conforming.

So the next time you're holding yourself back from doing something you want to do, tell yourself my mantra: to be cringe is to be free. Fuck it, ask that person to dance. Skip all the way to your next class. Cosplay that character from your favorite show. Be loud. Be cringe.

Be you.

- Kairi Lising, arts and culture editor

Like it? Hate it? Let us know.

Email us your opinions at elle.daniel@umontana.edu

Knight vision



Two knights square off in a semi-realistic dual at Missoula's first Renaissance festival.
WILL LADYMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

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

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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:

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

In local news...

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DEMOLITION PERMIT APPROVED

The Missoula City Council approved an appeal to begin construction on the Old Post Hospital at Fort Missoula after a special meeting last week.

The developer, FAE Missoula Hospital LLC, originally bought the property in 2019 and planned to develop it into office space, but rising costs forced FAE to find an alternative plan.

"When we got it and realized how much it would cost, it made no economic sense," FAE manager Kenneth Wolf said to KPAX.

Originally constructed in 1911, the property operated as a hospital until 1947 and then as a mental health facility before ceasing operations in the mid-2010s. The property went up for sale in 2017.

Developers determined the building was too damaged to renovate and it would be better to demolish it as a whole.

Elizabeth Johnson, historic preservation officer for the City of Missoula, said the Historic Preservation Commission rejected FAE's report of economic hardship.

"Information provided pointed to evidence of self-created hardship," Johnson said.

The developer objected to the decision and appealed to the Missoula City Council, which voted 7-1 to approve.

While some Missoula City Council members expressed a desire to keep the property as-is, the developers are now legally approved to demolish the property.

NEW YMCA CAMPUS

The YMCA in Missoula reopened a newly renovated campus on Russell Street, updating the 40-year-old facility for long-term use.

The YMCA celebrated the reopening with a block party which included music, bounce houses, food trucks and tours of the facilities with its new updates. According to the CEO of the YMCA, Heather Foster, the goal of the event was to celebrate the YMCA's renovation.

"A lot of blood, sweat and tears went into this project, and we are so excited for everyone to come and see it," Foster said.

Named the "Here for Good Capital Project," the block party was free to attend. Donors supported the celebration with the goal to highlight the importance of the Missoula facilities updates.

MISSOULA TEACHER RECOGNIZED AS STATE FINALIST FOR NATIONAL AWARD

A Missoula math teacher at Target Range School has been recognized as a state finalist for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

Alison Lokey, who is a 7th and 8th-grade math teacher, is known for her ability to inspire students in their studies. Her award highlights her impact on the Missoula community.

Students and colleagues admire Lokey's teaching style and her commitment to education, according to NonStop Local.

DOWNTOWN MISSOULA TO FEATURE INDIGENOUS ART

The massive, bare concrete walls surrounding NorthWestern's power substation in downtown Missoula will soon see a burst of art from Indigenous artists and poets.

The Downtown Riverside Arts Walls project, or DRAW, plans to provide art and poetry from Salish artists, enough to cover 4,700 square feet of walls around the substation. The substation was recently updated, but the outer walls have remained a blank orange until now.

According to the DRAW project's website, the south, east and west facing sides of the substation will feature large linocut works of fish, magpie and bison created by Frank Finley, and other walls will feature original poetry by Vic Charlo in both its English and Salish translations.

Poteet Construction is facilitating hanging the large installations on the substation walls.



Coming up next week...

The Clark Fork: Missoula's flowing heart. Humans have relied on the river for thousands of years, but over the past few decades booming recreation has impacted the river, its banks and its water quality.

A decrease in water quality can lead to complications for local wildlife, particularly bull trout, which are listed as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act.

The City of Missoula has introduced the Clark Fork River Restoration and Access project in hope of reducing bank erosion and revegetating the river bank.

"We started to see significant impacts to vegetation along the banks as well as erosion, which was impacting water quality. [Bull trout are] particularly susceptible to sedimentation of the river. That's one of the leading problems with bull trout," said Nathan McLeod, associate director of planning, design and projects for the City of Missoula Parks and Recreation.

Next week's Kaimin Cast episode highlights how the Clark Fork River Restoration and Access project balances human recreation with natural resource conservation. Check out The Clark Fork: Missoula's flowing heart, next Monday by heading to our website at montanakaimin.com or wherever you get your podcasts.



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



MEDIA RESTRICTIONS AT THE PENTAGON

The Pentagon updated its media credentials for journalists at the Pentagon Headquarters.

Reporters must now sign a document ensuring they will not share information that is not pre-authorized for release.

Imposed by the Trump administration, journalists who go against this new policy risk losing their Pentagon credentials. Information not authorized for release includes classified information, and all information must be approved for public release by officials.

The rule change also restricts the press from roaming the halls of the Pentagon, as highlighted in a media post on X by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

Advocates for freedom of the press called this rule change an attack on journalism rights and free journalism.

THE JOB MARKET

IBM chair and former National Economic Council director Gary Cohn said in a statement Sunday that "we've seen the job market degrade," but said he feels it may be temporary.

This follows the Federal Reserve's lowering of the interest rates by 0.25 percentage points amid a slower economic growth and labor market.

Cohn said a possible explanation was a cutback in the number of employees companies keep.

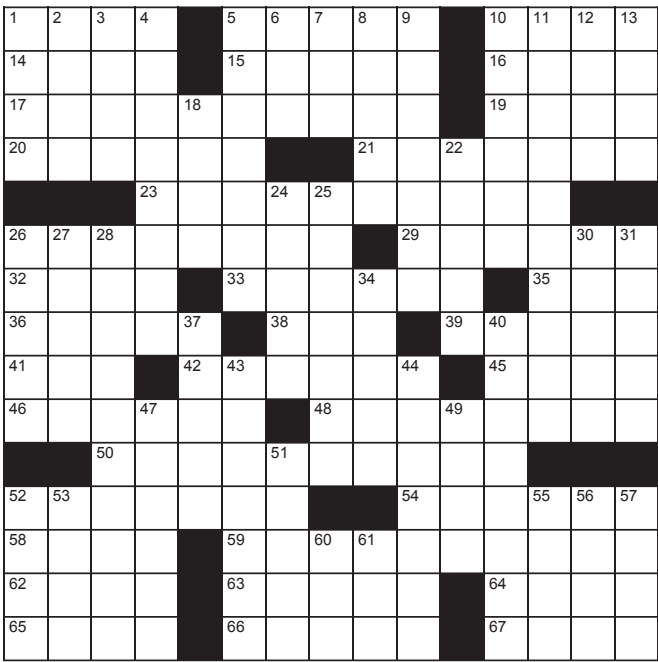
He noted this change is not specific to one job market, but he "heard it directly from corporate CEOs in every business line that they have gone out of their way to cut their human capital overhead."

TIKTOK DEALS CONTINUE

New details of the deal between the U.S. and China concerning the control of TikTok were announced by White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt.

According to Leavitt, the deal "does put America first." She clarified that TikTok will be mainly controlled by Americans in the U.S., and of the seven seats on the board that controls the app, six will be Americans.

Leavitt also explained data and privacy features will be controlled by Oracle, a U.S. software company. She confirmed on Saturday the administration is "100% confident that a deal is done."



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- ACROSS**
- 1 Sandpaper grade
 - 5 _____ Domingo
 - 10 Scrub up, e.g.
 - 14 Footnote word
 - 15 Fingerprint feature
 - 16 Big name in jeans
 - 17 Popped up again
 - 19 "Terrible" ruler
 - 20 Maker of Barbie dolls
 - 21 Reaches, as a goal
 - 23 Hunches
 - 26 Docility
 - 29 Decorating themes
 - 32 "How sweet _____!"
 - 33 Stop for gas
 - 35 Playskool product
 - 36 Homer's son, et al.
 - 38 Tenement pest
 - 39 Discontinued Toyota line
 - 41 Car accessory
 - 42 "Be quiet!"
 - 45 Not duped by
 - 46 Make queasy
 - 48 Like some marriages
 - 50 Irregularity
 - 52 Army officer
 - 54 Kitchen filters
 - 58 Quite often
 - 59 Boardwalk cooler
 - 62 Overabundance
 - 63 Cherished
 - 64 Coastal bird
 - 65 Word before chair or street
- DOWN**
- 1 Mattress option
 - 2 Notion
 - 3 Not on the rocks
 - 4 Closest to vacant
 - 5 Be horribly hot
 - 6 "Just as I thought!"
 - 7 Neither partner
 - 8 Grab the tab
 - 9 Antiquated
 - 10 Yielding
 - 11 Taking another look at
 - 12 "Westworld" star _____ Rachel Wood
 - 13 Bowler's targets
 - 18 Brown alternative
 - 22 Workshop items
 - 24 Manual readers
 - 25 Old Persian capital
 - 26 "In the Heat of the Night" detective
 - 27 Pong maker
 - 28 Extraordinary
 - 30 "Shiloh" author Shelby
 - 31 Church council
 - 34 One-eighty
 - 37 Hollywood Martin
 - 40 Says OK
 - 43 Shows for the first time
 - 44 Act as chair-person
 - 47 Type of pine
 - 49 Where Bhutan is
 - 51 "Tiny Dancer" singer
 - 52 Hamster's home
 - 53 Earthenware pot
 - 55 Nam lead-in
 - 56 Shade of beige
 - 57 Put in the mail
 - 60 "Selma" director DuVernay
 - 61 Albanian coin
- Answers to Previous Crossword:**
- | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | P | A | D | E | S | P | E | C | M | I | C | E |
| C | A | S | E | D | T | U | N | A | A | N | O | N |
| A | P | P | L | I | C | A | N | T | S | U | N | I |
| R | U | E | S | E | N | S | I | T | I | V | E | L |
| F | A | N | F | O | L | D | C | O | M | E | R | |
| H | O | S | T | A | N | T | I | S | E | R | A | |
| I | N | T | E | R | C | H | A | N | G | E | A | |
| V | E | R | S | A | P | O | E | K | E | E | N | |
| E | S | E | D | U | T | Y | F | R | E | E | | |
| D | O | M | I | N | E | E | R | I | N | G | L | E |
| A | H | E | M | S | M | O | L | D | E | R | I | N |
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| L | O | S | S | O | D | E | S | S | T | E | W | S |

AI baddie-o-scope

KAIRI LISING | ARTS & CULTURE EDITOR
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The age of AI is upon us. There's nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. Well, like I always say, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. Which fictional robot hottie are you head over heels for?

LIBRA (SEP. 23-OCT. 22): You can't wait to bring Baymax home to meet your parents. And who can blame you? He's a total catch. Soft, kind and caring? Always looking out for your health? Soulless eyes? If y'all ever break up, send him my way.

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21): Ask and you shall receive, Scorpio! You look for

someone who answers all your questions with honesty, and who better to do that than the always informative Cortana. Not only will she provide tactical advice in the heat of battle, but she also has a fuck ass bob. Always trust a bitch with a fuck ass bob.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21): Tall, metal and handsome: Your new boyfriend is the Iron Giant. He loves long walks on the beach and screwing. How did you manage to bag that tall glass of nuts and bolts? Teach me your ways!

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19): Ultron may be a supervillain who wants to destroy the universe, but you can fix him! He won you over with his deep voice and sharp jawline, but turns out he has a soft spot for Disney movies. We love a bad boy with a backstory.

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18): Your dad approves of your new AI boyfriend, Robocop. His monotone voice and the fact that you can't make eye contact had you at hello. He may be half robot, but he's human where it counts. Dead or alive, he's coming for you.

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20): You're a sucker for romance, Pisces, and a white blue-eyed hottie named Eva has

swept you off your feet. She loves to take you flying across the stars and plant shopping. Too bad she keeps mentioning her ex, WALL-E.

ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19): The Terminator appeared to you in a blast of sexy, time travelling lightning and now you can't get enough. Not only is he artificially hot, but he's also intelligent in bed. You've always wanted someone to match your freak, and the Terminator fills that robot-shaped hole. He'll be back, for sure.

TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20): The Tin Man is an AI robot, right? Well, either way, he has your heart. Beyond his kind, shiny tin exterior is a creaky, oiled-up freak, and you wouldn't

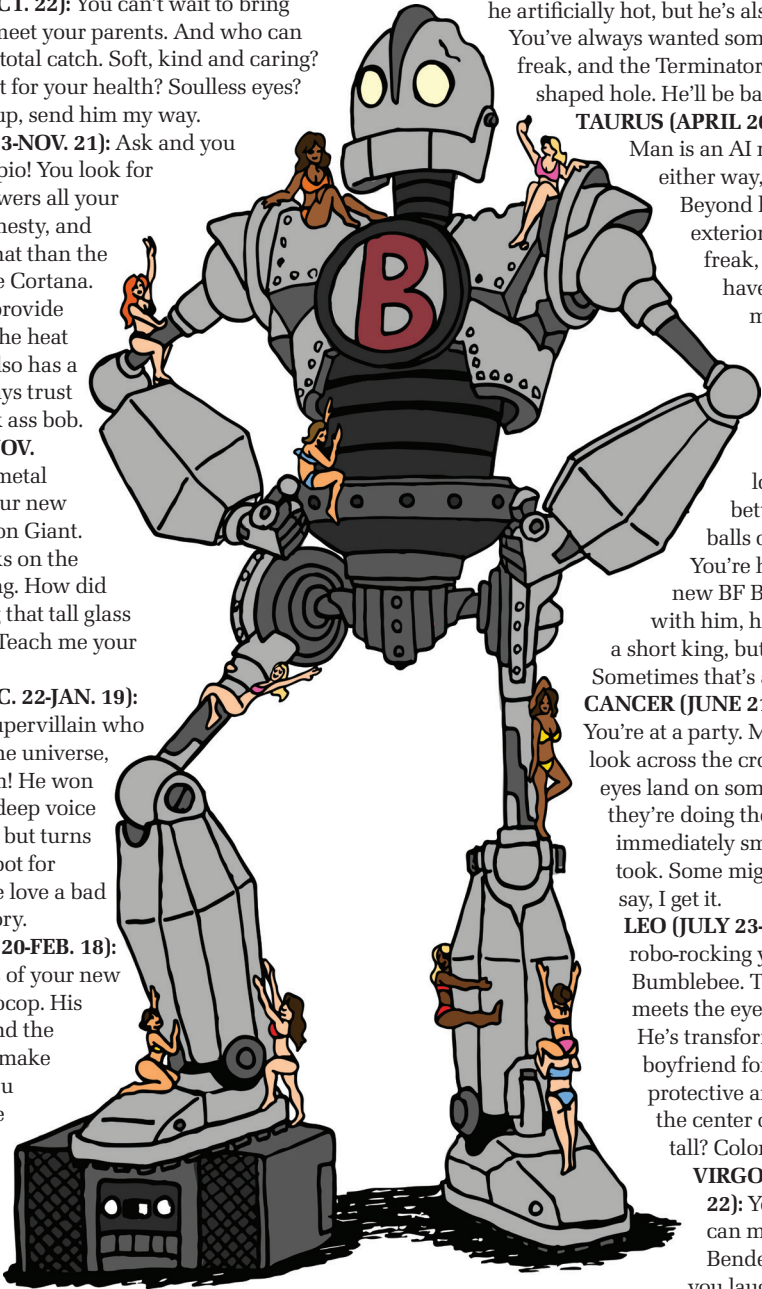
have it any other way. Just make sure you have an oil can nearby for those yellow brick rendezvous.

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20): You love balls. What's better than one ball? Two balls on top of each other! You're hard-launching your new BF BB-8. When you roll up with him, heads turn. He may be a short king, but he makes you laugh. Sometimes that's all you need.

CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22): Picture it: You're at a party. Music bumping. You look across the crowded room and your eyes land on someone you know. And they're doing the robot. And you're immediately smitten. That's all it took. Some might say you're crazy. I say, I get it.

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22): Who's robo-rocking your world? Bumblebee. There's more than meets the eye with auto-babe. He's transformed into the perfect boyfriend for you: spunky, protective and adoring. You're the center of his world. And he's tall? Color me jealous!

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 22): You love a guy who can make you laugh, and Bender definitely makes you laugh. He may hate all humans, but you're special! There may be a lot of red flags on account of alcoholism, but he's a hottie.



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

Student body has mixed emotions on CyberBear's replacement

AIDAN GRAHAM | NEWS REPORTER
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The University of Montana introduced its new information dashboard Griz Portal, to replace its prior system CyberBear.

This decision became a controversial topic among the student body and faculty, but the University remains adamant these changes are here to streamline student information access through updated and modern navigation interface. IT ticketing and suggesting systems are in place to address complaints over the new systems complexity and accessibility.

According to the University IT Department, the updates from system vendor El-Lucian would no longer support CyberBear in its current state.

"CyberBear looked the same 16 years ago as it does now, it was time for a refresh," said Zach Rossmiller, chief information officer at the University of Montana.

The IT department said Griz Portal is the culmination of a multi-year project with a focus on functionality, mobile friendliness and customizability, resulting in creation of the card system. The system organizes information tabs by labeled cards giving each student the ability to hide or customize placement of their tabs.

"When the project was introduced to us we worked with focus groups and current students, the response was relatively positive," said Stephanie Geyer, vice president of marketing and brand strategy. "They appreciated the freshness and personalization through the card system, but we haven't done any testing since three summers ago, and technology is always changing."

While testing positively with focus groups three years ago, reactions to changes have been mixed from both students and faculty. Many students find the new system, which launched at the beginning of the semester, complex and difficult to navigate.

"I think as a returning student, it's really frustrating," said Sophia Braddock, a sophomore criminology student. "I liked how in order everything was originally. It's difficult finding where everything is, and

getting to the things I need, like the pay portal. It just takes a while to get where you want to."

According to an IT research group, Gartner, 73% of employees report that undergoing organizational change results in moderate to high stress levels. Disrupting people's control and established familiarity can weigh heavy on individuals, creating resistance in adapting to new circumstances.

The University administration said both the design and marketing team working on Griz Portal were small for a project of this size, requiring a "Herculean" effort to bring it together.

"Tech testing is really hard because everyone comes from a different perspective, which can make it so much harder to adjust, so I'm not surprised people are having a difficult time adapting to new tech," Geyer said. "It's easy to create friction when introducing unfamiliar things, and it's something we try to avoid."

Perspective differences remain key to discourse, as students who've taken issue trend towards those who've seen the change, while freshman students have shown less pushback. "I've noticed it's a little easier to navigate through your classes and course catalog. I've had no major issues," said Noah Heide, a freshman forestry major.

According to a paper from the National Library of Medicine, "When thinking about change, resistance is often the first thing that comes to mind. This is because individuals think of change as a shock that inversely affects them to think of negative consequences and hence, they resist change or develop an uncertainty about change processes."

Faculty and administration have also had difficulty adjusting to the new system, with many having used CyberBear for their entire careers at the University.

"With new tech like this, folks like myself who have been around for a while take some time to adjust," said Dave Kuntz, the director of strategic communications at UM.

As discourse continues, the IT depart-

ment remains confident that people will not only continue to adjust, but that the system will adjust with the student body itself. While the University is focused on other projects, staff in IT continue to make on-the-fly changes in regards to online feedback.

"It's agile so nothing is static. We can keep making changes, [adding] cards, [removing] cards and that's what we'll see in the next couple years based on community feedback," Rossmiller said.

Though some of the student body remains frustrated with how these changes affect student access, the University believes not only will students and faculty adjust, but also by working with feedback from the student body, the department can make the adequate changes to satisfy all parties involved.



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9/26 & 9/27 Dakota Poorman @9:30PM!

9/24 Line Dance Lessons @7PM!

9/26 & 10/3 Country Dance Lessons @7PM!

Karaoke @8:30PM Every Sunday, Tuesday & Thursday!

Harvard professor speaks about strengthening democracy and social capital

BLUE ROGALSKI | NEWS REPORTER

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A Harvard professor visited the University of Montana to encourage students to build a higher social capital, or the strength of relationships, in order to save the democratic system.

Robert Putnam, a political scientist focused in comparative politics, has noticed an increase in isolation coinciding with an increase in societal division, he said to the crowd of nearly 300 people.

Specifically focusing his studies on bowling habits in America over the years, Putnam noticed while more people began bowling individually, the rate at which they were bowling in clubs and teams was steadily declining. He noticed these patterns in other group activities as the rate of social isolation increased in the country.

"In my lifetime, we have gone from being one of the most equal countries in the world to virtually the least equal," he said. Putnam added that along with the inequality, the country had stopped thinking as a "we" and more of a collection of "I"s.

"If people are regularly getting together and having face-to-face interactions throughout their community, you are exponentially more likely to have a healthy and functioning democratic institution," Skye Borden, the deputy director of the Mansfield Center.

Borden said she thinks there is a huge role for educational institutions to be an anchor in creating the best conditions possible for students to foster a lifelong practice of strengthening their social relationships.

"What [Putnam] discovered really early on is that the strength of our social fabric, our social capital, is one of the best predictors for a healthy, functioning democracy," Borden said.

University of Montana President, Seth Bodnar said during his introduction, "There's never been a better time to welcome a speaker like Robert Putnam to our campus."

Putnam said last year's presidential election was not out of the ordinary. "The 2024 election was a major sign post. Trump did not create our animized and polarized America, he exploited it," he said.

America has never been as divided as it is today, Putnam said, showing graphs depicting a social inclusion trend, which is down since the 1960s. Similar looking graphs mapped social capital and economic equality. Every graph was a distinct bell-shape, rising and falling after the 1960s.

"The only time we were as polarized as we are now was between 1860 and 1865, during the Civil War," Putnam said.

He recalled a Missoula event where almost a thousand students and protesters gathered for the right to free speech, adding that they must be able to gather again to protect democracy.



Robert D. Putnam, a research professor of public policy at Harvard University, gives the first President's Lecture of the 2025 season at the University of Montana on Sept. 15. His speech, "Making Democracy Work," was on American policy, politics, culture and more. **LEO SPERRY / MONTANA KAIMIN**

"Montana led Americans to a better place. And you can do it again. And you must do it again," Putnam said.

Borden said she felt it is important for her to internalize Putnam's work and practice it in her life.

"Reading Putnam has really inspired me to make changes in my life," she said. "It inspired me to think more critically about my life and how I'm spending my free time. It's really easy to look at your life and say 'I don't have time for this' or 'I'm not a joiner' but I asked myself what I can be doing to bring this back into my life."

Putnam's research indicates social capital is more significant to a functioning democracy than other signs people tend to associate with functioning democracies.

His work explores the different kinds of social capital which include bringing people with similar interests together and bringing people with a wide variety of backgrounds together. These kinds of social capitals tend to not have very much in common, but encourage skills and qualities needed to be a mean-

ingful contributor to a functioning democracy, Borden said.

Putnam's hope is that more people will engage with others who are not necessarily similar, allowing for a peaceful coexistence and deeper understanding of each person as a member of society.

The greater the amount of social interactions, the more positive interactions people will have with each other, leading them to be more comfortable with different people. People are less likely to engage in stereotyping of other people. This encourages a larger group effort in democratic goal, he said.

"What I've felt like I had time for was trying to do a regular lunch service at the Poverello center, because homelessness was one thing I felt a little fatalistic about," Borden said. "It's been one of the most meaningful things I have done in a long time."

For those who are isolated with a lower social capital, they are more likely to focus on crime and be fear-based and protective, according to Putnam.

"I think for us, this is a really challenging time," Borden said. "It's easy to blame technology for our fraying social fabric."

She said there are other factors for the current state of low social capital at play right now, which can also be seen on the campus of the University.

Putnam looked at how increasing financial difficulties and suburbanization are leading factors in the decline of capital. Generationally there has been a cultural shift away from wanting to join clubs, groups and activities, according to Putnam's research.

"One of the wonderful things about an academic environment is that we are able to create opportunities for students," Borden said. "We can also serve as an incubator for good ideas that enrich our entire community."

This was the first of three in the President's Lecture Series, as well as the Lucille Speare Memorial Lecture. The next in the series will be Ross Gay, author of "The Book of Delights," on Thursday, Oct. 30th.

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PHOTOS BY

KALLIE MOORE HAS LOVED FOSSILS ALL HER LIFE. NOW, SHE'S KEEPING THE PASSION FOR PALEO ALIVE

Kallie M

AST GIST

TORY BY ELLE DANIEL
Y HENRY DOELLINGER

AT UM

Long, brown plaster teeth protrude from the top and bottom jaws of the impressive replica *Tyrannosaurus rex* skull. It's the centerpiece of the Charles H. Clapp's small paleontology exhibit, and today, the University of Montana's only paleontologist, UM collections manager Kallie Moore, waits by it while her Family Weekend tour group trickles in.

As Moore explains to the tour, the sharp teeth weren't used for tearing or grinding their food. The *T. rex* may have used a "gravity assisted feeding" technique, she said, launching its prey into the air before catching it and swallowing it whole.

The fun fact elicits awed, impressed expressions and more questions from the parents. Moore is ready to answer them all with practiced ease.

Moore has an official title – collections manager for the University of Montana's Paleontology Center – but she prefers to call herself a "fossil librarian." On any given day, Moore rocks a silver necklace in the shape of a circular, ridged ammonite fossil. With so

"Eons," which has over three million subscribers.

Despite her wealth of experience, and the rich history of paleontology at UM, the University does not have a steady paleontology program and currently offers no paleontology classes. Moore, from her basement crammed with specimens, is the last bastion of fossilized studies on campus. It's a symptom of a wider national decline in geosciences, but with the collection splitting away from the geosciences department, Moore predicts a brighter, more public-facing future for the fossils.

Paleontology isn't just a job for Moore. It's also her strongest calling – one that started in the gravel of her elementary school in Kansas.

Now, Moore and other campus collections, including the MONTU Herbarium and the Philip L. Wright Zoological Museum, decided to leave the geosciences department and form the UM Biodiversity Research Collection. The decision, made in July, came after a reshuffle of multiple departments

more you understand the past," she said, "the better you can understand the future."

UM'S JURASSIC PAST

Part of Montana's deep paleontological history lies within neatly organized space-saver storage lockers beneath the Clapp Building – a place where few students, besides Moore's dedicated volunteers, ever go.

The room is a tall space, and although it's filled with rocks, it carries the slightly wet, musty smell of constant humidity. Stepping across the threshold isn't just stepping into the past, it's crossing into a 24/7 warm climate probably not too far off from what prehistoric creatures enjoyed millions of years ago. To combat the heat, Moore constantly runs a small fan by the door.

The giant space-saver containers slide electronically from one side of the room to the other, each one labeled with the era and location. One tray from the Bear Gulch holds fossilized fish Moore said were most likely buried alive.

A small coelacanth fish is entirely frozen in a piece of stone no bigger than a standard smartphone. Other stones hold the impression of ancient worms and plants, their miniscule leaves and veins captured in near-perfect, fossilized detail. A tray of ammonites, the ridged spiral-shelled cephalopods, sit on a shelf, flakes of mother-of-pearl glittering on their bumpy outer edges.

Moore has the only paid paleontology position on campus. Her volunteers are just that, there for the work experience and the blink-and-you'll-miss-it brush with the bones. Along with Moore, they are solely responsible for keeping thousands of fossils organized and preserved, all on their own time.

Before the tour, Moore shows her newest volunteer around the space.

"Watch this," Moore says, and presses a button to move the space savers across the room. As they slide to the left, Moore darts in between the massive shelves. She scrunches up her face, pantomiming being squished like the famous trash compactor scene in "Star Wars." Everyone in the room flinches in fear, but the space savers stop just shy of her shoulders. Moore grins and points to the monitor at the bottom of the shelf. Lasers, she explains, keep the system from crushing anybody.

The fossil collection first found its home on campus in the 1890s, around the same time the University of Montana was established. It originally belonged to Earl Douglass, a famous American paleontologist who, along with unearthing over 700,000 pounds of fossils, discovered the *apatosaurus*, a long-necked dinosaur that is estimated to be about 70 feet tall and weighed over 25 tons, or around 50,000 pounds.

Douglass, known for his stiff handlebar mustache and thin, wire-framed glasses, would also receive UM's first ever master's degree. He taught at the University for several years before moving onto Princeton and eventually the Carnegie Museum, a series



Kallie Moore shows fossils from UM's collection to freshmen students Connor Loftsgaarden (left) and Hailey Barto (center) on Sept. 18.

much knowledge ready to be shared at any moment, it makes sense why Moore jokingly calls herself a "rolodex of evolution."

Moore oversees the collection of around 40,000 fossil specimens found both in Montana and around the globe, including bones from dinosaurs, ancient marine life and even fossilized plants. In addition to keeping the collection organized and preserved, Moore carefully packs and sends specimens around the country for study, such as the American Museum of Natural History in New York and other prestigious institutes.

Over the years, Moore's garnered a national reputation for her expertise, traveling the country to speak, consulting with Disney for their "Dinosaur" ride at Animal Kingdom and hosting the successful PBS science show

on campus, including the major split within the College of Humanities and Sciences. With new buildings in the works for campus and the planned demolishing of the Clapp building, the paleontology collection became another piece of an intricate campus-wide reshuffle.

When the three collections finally separate fully from the geosciences department, they'll become their own entity within the University of Montana campus. Moore hopes the divestment will give the collection more stability and her job more protection, along with the chance to make the UM Paleontology Center more visible.

Moore said she loves being able to look back in time through paleontology and see how far life on the planet has come. "The

Moore oversees 40,000 fossils in UM's collection, currently located in the basement of the Clapp Building.

of highly esteemed museums in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

But UM's impact wouldn't stop with Douglass. After several long stretches, the University welcomed another student who'd become a prominent paleontologist: Jack Horner. His name is one die-hard Jurassic Park fans and paleontologists will recognize. Horner served as the franchise's technical advisor.

Before stepping foot onto film sets, Horner tried several times to study geology and other sciences at the University of Montana but ultimately stepped away due to severe dyslexia. The University would later give him an honorary doctorate.

Through the years, each new discovery added to a collection of prehistoric history, and each paleontologist that came through UM set up more opportunities for the next, until eventually, Moore found her way onto campus.

PREHISTORIC PASSIONS

On a tray in the collections room worktable sits a group of square shaped rocks with intricate layers like fresh puff pastry. These specimens, Moore said, are actually stromatolites, or layers of sediment produced by cyanobacteria. The ones in the collection are over three billion years old. When Moore picks them up, she is literally holding billions of years in her manicured hands.

Moore's father passed down his love of fossils to her when she was young. She spent her recesses searching the playground for segments of fossils called crinoids, marine invertebrates that look similar to starfish, only with a lot more arms. According to Moore, the Kansas City area is known for its marine fossils.

But growing up so far away from the big cities and their easily accessible history museums, Moore's love of paleontology wavered as she entered high school. "I was kind of isolated," she said.

She directed her sights at a different goal: becoming a high school biology teacher. But the dream didn't last for long.

At Emporia State University in eastern Kansas, Moore quickly discovered the emphasis of her education degree fell much more on the teaching side than the science side. She didn't want to learn about putting together curriculums, she wanted to learn about how the planet worked. "I hated the classes," she said. "I thought they were useless. It didn't feel right."

After taking her first physical science classes, Moore realized she needed to return to what she loves most — fossils.

When she switched her major to earth sciences with a minor in paleontology, everything fell into place. "If you're lucky to find your way in college, it's not going to feel hard anymore," Moore said. "It becomes fascinating."

In her last geology class, Moore learned about a job opening for the collections manager at the University of Montana. Intrigued, she applied. Suddenly, she had a job interview.

She started as the collections manager in 2008, arriving just in time for a massive renovation that would see the reorganization of the collection and the installation of massive space saver units — a project that fell to the newly-hired Moore to oversee.

While she never pursued the teaching degree, volunteers who work for Moore said she's teaching them all the time. "Kallie is always more than open to geek out about whatever new news is going on in paleontology," said Chris Williams, a geology major and one of Moore's former volunteers. "She's just a very easygoing person, very easy to talk to, very warm."

Payton Gardner, the geosciences department chair, said Moore's found a special niche within a competitive field. But it's not just a niche in one area. Moore works outside the collections office, both online and in person, diversifying her reach across the globe.

MOORE, MOORE, MOORE

Over the nearly 17 years she's been working at UM, Moore's found opportunities both within the state and around the world to educate the public about paleontology.

Moore spent several months as a consultant for Walt Disney Imagineering, helping

them create an accurate display for the queue gallery on its "Dinosaur" ride.

As well as co-hosting "Eons," Moore also works as its fact-checker, poring over scientific papers and journals to find new topics and back up the science they make their videos about.

In 2022, Moore released a children's book through Neon Squid Books. "Tales of the Prehistoric World" takes young readers through the different eras of dinosaurs and into the Ice Age.

In the past year, Moore estimates she travelled around 80,000 air miles, visiting places like Milwaukee, New York City and Nova Scotia.

The pace is breakneck and the work varies every day, but back on campus, new developments within the science programs have Moore optimistic toward a brighter — and better funded — future.

A FOSSILIZED PROGRAM

The reason for UM's missing paleontology program can't be narrowed down to just one cause. Funding, student interest and consolidation of the geosciences department, which included paleontology, all play a part.

Before Moore stepped into the role of collections manager, paleontologist George Stanley worked at UM, establishing the UM Paleontology Center in 2005. Stanley studied corals from the Triassic period and traveled around countries in the Alps collecting specimens. He later secured a grant from the National Science Foundation to renovate the collection room, a project he passed on to Moore. Stanley eventually retired fully in 2018. Now, UM's focus in sciences has shifted.

"The geosciences department is definitely moving away from paleo, and they have been for quite some time," Moore said.

When Stanley retired, it left the program without a paleontologist professor to teach classes. Bringing a new one on would cost the geosciences department thousands of dollars. Gardner, estimated the cost of hiring an adjunct professor would cost around \$6,000 per semester. Hiring a full-time tenured professor would cost even more, a price he estimated at around \$100,000.

As for the student side of things, Gardner and Moore both noted a decline in student interest. According to Gardner, geosciences are trending down across the nation. Gardner said he worries about the future and the planet as less students are educated in geosciences.

"We are going to start facing larger and larger problems concerning resource limitations and climatic patterns," Gardner said. "Fewer and fewer students are being educated on how the Earth works and how it evolves under these times of change."

While the 2025 numbers are not yet available, a UM census noted a decline in geoscience majors between 2023 and 2024 fall semesters. Eight new geoscience majors joined the program in the fall of 2023, but there were none in 2024.



Moore, UM collections manager, stands for a portrait with a mammoth tooth, donated by the child that found it near Missoula.

"IT'S NOT LIKE, 'OH I'LL NEVER FIGURE IT OUT, SO I MIGHT AS WELL QUIT,' MOORE SAID. 'IT'S, 'HOW CLOSE CAN I GET? HOW MUCH CAN WE KNOW?'"

In the meantime, Moore said she's noticed a shift of interest into hydrology, the study of water and how it interacts with the Earth.

"When you have the resources to get a new professor, where do you put that money?" Moore said. "Do you put it in a very quickly growing academic unit, or do you put it in something that's floundering?"

The program itself is shrinking, too. Gardner said when he first started teaching at UM in 2015, the geosciences department had 12 tenured professors. Now, the department only has four.

"I'd love to hire another tenure track paleontologist, but we don't have the funding to do it," Gardner said. "I would love to be able to have a vibrant and big enough department to do that. I sort of see paleontology as the frosting on the cake."

Gardner said there's competition between UM and Montana State University in Bozeman. MSU currently offers a bachelor's degree in earth sciences with a specialization in paleontology. The program offers upper level courses detailing fossil preservation and field studies.

Moore wishes the University of Montana had a paleontology program. She said she's encouraged prospective students over the years to study at other schools with better programs. It's a sentiment Gardner echoed.

"MSU has a far bigger department. They have a huge paleontology center," he said. "If a student really wants to study paleontology, they should 100% go to MSU."

The lack of paleontology opportunities on campus is in sharp contrast against the rich history of prehistoric creatures in Montana – and UM's own stake in paleontology.

LOOKING AHEAD

In early July, the UM Paleontology Center, along with the MONTU Herbarium and the Philip L. Wright Zoology Museum decided to divest from geosciences after the department split from the Humanities and Sciences college. The three collections plan to form the UM Biodiversity Research Collection.

The MONTU Herbarium houses over 135,000 plants, from lichens and seeds to algae and vascular plants, making it the largest collection in Montana. The Philip L. Wright Zoology Museum similarly houses an extensive collection of vertebrate specimens.

Moore said this shift is still in its early planning stages, so any impacts both positively and negatively are still up in the air.

Altogether, the three collections will join the Broader Impacts Group, an organization on campus that, in exchange for joining, asks participants like the newly formed UM Biodiversity Research Collection to put together public events, exhibits and learning opportunities.

By stepping back from the geosciences department, the paleontology collection becomes part of the University itself, Moore said. With that freedom, she's looking forward to hosting public events and getting some fundraisers planned.



Moore fixes exhibit labels before a tour of the Clapp Building's exhibits on Sept. 19.

"We're thinking about some fun, collaborative things that we could do on campus," Moore said. "Possibly doing a big outreach event in the evenings as a kind of like, 'Here we are. This thing exists, come find us.'"

The shrinking geosciences department had Moore on edge, concerned about the stability of the collection, but she said the divestment from geosciences gives her the space and the opportunity to do more. She hopes to land an endowment for the collection.

Putting the spotlight back on the paleontology collection in order to gain more public visibility and funding is another future goal of Moore's. In the past, Moore intentionally flew under the radar in order to keep the collection out of financial jeopardy.

"If they don't know about me, they can't cut me," Moore said. "It's a bummer for geosciences to lose the collection, but it takes a lot of pressure off the geosciences to fund it. The other thing it also does is it creates a little bit more of a safe space for me and the collection."

Currently, the fossil collection's only operating budget is Moore's salary and benefits.

"The only funding we have is me," Moore said. "Right now it's just me, my hourly wage and my health insurance is paid for me to take care of the collection."

Expenses for day-to-day items like boxes or sticky tack to repair the labels in the display

cases come directly out of Moore's pocket. But bigger purchases, like any potential repairs to the space saver units or the high-priced storage trays the collection uses, get more murky. There is no clear answer on who foots the bill, Moore's salary and benefits.

There are plans in the future to move the collection into a sciences building, one so early in the construction process Moore said it hasn't even been designed yet. But she said she's ready to get out of the Clapp Building, out of the humidity and the heat of the basement and into a better, cleaner space.

"Right now I'm feeling more optimistic about my place and the collection's place on campus," Moore said.

Until then, she makes do with the occasional leaking pipe, the constantly running fan and the quiet sounds of the volunteers working their way through millions of years of history.

CHASING MYSTERIES

Most of Moore's work on campus is quiet. She sits at a desk in the collection room surrounded by "Eons" and memorabilia. There are 3D printed Tyrannosaurus rex skulls, dinosaur toys and a wooden assemble-it-yourself skeleton propped up on the shelves around her. A homemade cardboard cutout on one of the wooden cases displays the real size of a triceratops footprint. Informational posters on fossils, from dinosaurs to plant life, line nearly every inch of available wall space.

Moore recently gave her returning volunteers, who she jokingly calls "repeat offenders," more work, including leading tours for the elementary schools that come to visit. Now she tackles the bigger, more public events like Family Weekend and donor visits.

While she's been at UM for nearly two decades, Moore still sees the appeal of paleontology, especially as new technology emerges. Scanning allows the creation of accurate, in-depth images of fossils that can be shared between institutions and stored for future study. 3D printing gives museums new opportunities to safely display fossils.

But even with modern technology helping scientists make new discoveries every day, there are still answers Moore may never find. Some environments and climates were just too inhospitable for bones to become fossilized. She wonders what dinosaurs might've existed in those places, like areas with high elevations, or in the more humid regions where moisture can creep into fossils and turn them into pyrite, crumbling them in the process.

Even so, the mysteries are too good not to chase after.

"It's not like, 'Oh I'll never figure it out, so I might as well quit,'" Moore said. "It's, 'How close can I get? How much can we know?'"

Coping with homesickness

BEE REISWIG | ARTS REPORTER
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Mackenzie Weisgerber, a 19-year-old sophomore accounting major, is more than 3000 miles away from her home in Waimea, Hawaii.

In the aftermath of Family Weekend, it's relevant to consider the effects of homesickness on one's life and the ways in which one can alleviate it.

A lot of University of Montana students are missing home: the familiarity, the home-cooked meals and the comfort of a hug. That all-too-familiar feeling can be eased through resources on campus and staying away from unhealthy habitats.

Last year, as a freshman, Weisgerber missed home more than she does now. She would call her mom daily. The first two months of calls often involved crying. But even with a year under her belt, some days are harder than others.

Recently, Weisgerber wished she could be home to celebrate her high school volleyball team's win. It has won all of its eight games this season, and she wanted to be there to cheer the team on.

"I definitely feel some homesickness for the hobbies that I used to do and the people that I know," Weisgerber said. In her first year, "I missed the comfort of being around people that I knew really well and people who knew me really well and so it was very overwhelming."

After all, college is a time of exploration and change. In junior Layne Lathrop's case, it felt refreshing to have some freedom.

The 20 year old had strict parents growing up. She's close with her family, who live in Deer Park, Washington, and often misses them. However, it has also been fun for her to live on her own.

"When I came here, I was like 'I'm free!'" Lathrop said. "Now that I've been here longer, I'm definitely a little more homesick because I'm starting to realize and appreciate everything my parents did for me that I may have taken for granted."

Lathrop's solution for homesickness is often to Facetime her family or spend time with her roommates.

"Being around people I'm close to here helps a lot, too," Lathrop said.

Kali Julius, the well being director at the Curry Health Center, said homesickness is one of the more hidden challenges when it

comes to students, but it is a part of other issues with such a big transition.

"[Students'] number one complaint is general overwhelm," Julius said. "Also social isolation, loneliness and needing some support with procrastination, time management and stress." All of these issues fall under the category of mental well being, according to Julius, which is one of the focuses of Curry's Wellness Center.

According to a 2025 study through the Institute of Technology of Cambodia, homesickness can reduce concentration, lead to lower grades and cause absenteeism.

As such, it's important to find coping strategies that work for each individual. Julius believes most people know what might make them feel better, but it can be a struggle to actually implement those changes. Phone and social media usage is one of the most common.

"I think there's a lot of doom scrolling or going to social media, using the phone as a way to cope and disconnect, which most of the time increases feelings of anxiety, stress and social isolation," Julius said. "It could also contribute to feeling homesick if you're seeing things back home that you're not able to engage in. We just kind of have this addiction to our phone, like all of us do."

When it comes to phone use, Julius recommends turning one's phone to black-and-white, as it can make scrolling a less exciting option.

Mindfulness and boundaries on social media are important as well, such as unfollowing certain accounts or regulating the amount of time you spend on apps. Most of all, she suggests checking in with yourself after passing the time on your phone.

In his book "College Students' Sense of Belonging," Terrell L. Strayhorn explained that a sense of belongingness and connection positively impacts college retention rate. Finding places where you fit in is a great way to alleviate homesickness and improve your college experience.

One way that Finn Mead, a 20-year-old in his second year studying physics, likes to bond with people is through clubs. Mead has been involved in the Student Recreation Association, Climate Response Club, Students for Nuclear Disarmament, Birding Club, Society of Physics Students, Psychology Club, Folklore Society and the now defunct Paragliding Club.

"When you go and talk to people, don't force a connection ... Fake connections don't help you really. Any real connections, even



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

if it's a weird one, is way more significant," Mead said.

"I have this idea that most people know what they need to do," Julius said. "So trying to bring that out and help them believe that,

'Hey, I can do better for myself. I know what to do' ... I think that's kind of the beauty of being an adult when you're transitioning to college is that you get to decide."



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A peek into Viva Montana's first Latin American Heritage Festival

NICOLETTE SEIBEL | ARTS REPORTER

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Music poured over the sunny riverside venue as students and Missoulians wandered through the colorful banners under the Caras Park pavilion. People danced barefoot on the grass with their mothers, fathers and friends.

Viva Montana's first-ever Latin American Heritage Festival was a celebration of community, food, dance and music from 10 a.m. until after sundown at Caras Park on Sept. 13. Lessons in Afro-Caribbean dance began at the northwest end of the pavilion while bands tuned guitars, set up drums and made space for trumpet performers on the stage.

Crowds soon arrived, and it wasn't long before the stadium seats to the grass dance-floor filled with children, grandparents and individuals of every age in between. You didn't have to be a professional dancer here to move to the music. Volunteers and professionals continued to lead community members in traditional dances from Zumba to Bachata, Samba and Cante Flamenco.

A diversity of cultures throughout Latin America and Mexico were represented in a variety of cuisines, including tamales, pupusas, arepas, elote and lemonade, served at food trucks lining the outside of the pavilion. Within the pavilion, tables and tents showcased crafts for children, information about different Latin American cultures and small businesses selling handmade clothing, art and more food.

The heartbeat of the festival was the rhythm and energy that pierced through every stranger, volunteer and performer from the pavilion to the Clark Fork River and the Beartacks Bridge above.

Among the crowd, University of Montana education graduate student Ceci Monroe said, "Right now, we are doing little celebrating. There is just a lot of fear going on in our country, so I think it is important that we get together and have fun."

Monroe left her hometown of Missoula in 2020 to spend a year in Colombia to immerse herself in the Spanish language. She found individuals and friendships that motivated her to learn the language even further. For Monroe, art and relationships have become her life.

Monroe has spent six months of the year since her first visit returning to rural Colom-



Festival attendees dance at the Latin Heritage Festival at Caras Park on Sept. 13.

JACKSON MAILEY | MONTANA KAIMIN

bia, and in Missoula, she is the lead guitarist and singer of the Colombian folk band Ceci y Pronto Alivo. From her experience in Missoula, this festival is the beginning of something that is much needed for the community. "I think that we need more spaces for people to feel safe to celebrate their culture, and this is one example of what this could look like," she said.

The sound of trumpets, drums, guitar and vocals from headliners Pan Blanco, Mitonga, Ricarda Lemvo, Canta Brazil and Son Montana induced an irresistible movement from people around. "It's an open door," Monroe said. "An invitation to see a very limited sliver of culture you see without being in it."

At the event, UM dance major Isabela Sant'Anna-Skites recalled dancing with her mother's side of the family in Brazil, and appreciated the dancing, which encapsulated the park, and the opportunity to speak Portuguese again. "We are all just here having a good time and loving one another," Sant'Anna-Skites said.

For her, connection and representation of heritage is crucial. "Especially now, with what's going on, it is important to remember that Missoula and the U.S. has so many

cultures and so many people and so many celebrations and music and dance that make up our shared culture," she said.

Sant'Anna-Skites intends on using her senior year as a dance major to create a project that will incorporate the codified styles of dance, like ballet and contemporary techniques, and deconstruct them by introducing Brazilian movements like Samba. She hopes the choreography will help her express herself through what she has been trained to perform throughout her life, and combine it with the memories and joy of dancing with her family. Similarly, the Latin American Heritage Festival offers a space for all cultures and dance styles to connect the community in a space that encourages movement throughout generations.

"You're seeing little kids and families and women, and you're seeing men dance, and I love that," Sant'Anna-Skites said. "Get the men dancing. This is what we need right now, we need connection."

For Gavin White, a 25-year-old Restoration Attendant for the City of Missoula, a poster advertising Latin American music in downtown Missoula was never a matter of where or when, it was the place he was going to be.

"I knew I was gonna dance my butt off," he said. Latin American music has always been on his radar. Ever since learning the trumpet and spending some time in the Dominican Republic, Viva Montana's festival had become one of his "best times of the year."

"Dancing and music is for the soul, and it breaks down barriers and lets people really have fun," he said.

When the festival came to an end, spontaneous conga lines dispersed and the band finished its last song. Cindy Munguia, owner of one of the tent stands called Sew Arte (or "Sew Art") had been at the park for 13 hours. She spent the day showcasing her upcycled menswear that adorned traditional Latin American and Mexican embellishments, such as embroidered portraits of Selena and Frida Kahlo, transforming clothing into "every-wear," or gender-inclusive garments.

To Munguia, the festival was reminiscent of the bands that she saw while visiting family in Austin, Texas, and the performers in the park were on the same level as the Latin fusion musicians she admired there. Even so, Viva Montana hosted an event that was unlike any other she had experienced before.

"The festival really focuses on the different dances and brings the music that goes with those dances," Munguia said. "Which is what makes it so special."

Munguia deemed the first Latin American Heritage Festival a success, and she hopes to be invited again next year. She said, "If not, I'm gonna invite myself!"

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Griz volleyball looks forward with pre-season success

HANNAH BENITEZ | SPORTS EDITOR
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Before sports fans even enter the practice court for the University of Montana volleyball team, they can hear the screams and cheers as the team prepares for the upcoming match-ups. As Griz volleyball enters the Big Sky Conference season, the team hopes it can bring its pre-season success along for the ride.

However, this year feels different for the Griz, starting with an eight-game win streak; the third best in program history.

The team isn't letting this achievement go to its heads. Both the players and Allison Lawrence, the team's coach, understand there is more at stake.

"I'm aware of the winning streak, but during games you can't focus on timestamps. You need to just be aware of what's present and be in the game," Lawrence said. "I want us to love volleyball and feel good, but understand that it's okay to look at this and understand how good it feels."

The previous 2024 season ended for the team with 10 wins out of its 27 games. Its 2023 season wasn't much kinder, ending with 11 wins. The last time the Griz finished in the top five of the Big Sky standings was 2022, earning fourth place.

While the team feels it's ready for the challenge of the Big Sky Conference, it's first game isn't going to be a simple win; the teams going to have to fight until the end. One of its opponents, Sacramento State, were last year's

Big Sky Tournament Champions. Sacramento State ended the season with a conference score of 11 to five, while Montana went the opposite score of five to 11.

"Our goal is to bring this momentum from the pre-season into conference play and show that the Griz are something to look out for," Lawrence said. "We need to show that we can be up there with the top teams, but also recognize that the teams at the top of the Big Sky [Conference] are harder opponents than those from pre-season."

The team also hopes to keep up the morale on the road. This year, 11 of its 19 games are away from home.

"Games where you're away from your classes or family are difficult, but it also allows us to have the idea that it's just us," Lawrence said. "It narrows the focus for the team. We strive off this 'us versus the world' mentality."

The team knows its goals for the season: to keep the streak going and potentially win the Big Sky Championship. While the goal hasn't changed, the attitude going into the season has shifted. Confidence and a sense of pride runs through the team, earned through its recent string of victories.

"[A winning streak] can do a lot for the players. The team goes a little bit unseen, especially since we don't have another league to compare it to," Lawrence said. "We just have to remind ourselves that we aren't defined by our wins or losses. Winning can make you complacent; it's just out of your control."



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Not being defined by wins or losses is a core mentality for the team. While the team understands wanting to take home the trophies, it also knows what past seasons have looked like.

Last season, the Griz finished the pre-season on the same note, however when it entered conference play, the fairytale came to an end. The team went on to only win one game out of its first five.

"Losing like that was not ideal, but we can't let last season define us anymore," Alexis Batezel, who plays as a defensive specialist said. "It was last season; it's in the past."

Batezel, a senior from Nevada studying forensic psychology, has spent her entire collegiate career with the Griz. She's seen the team through its ups and downs, from winning the Brawl of the Wild to being last in the league. Batezel knows what the toll of continuously losing can take on a player's mental health and well-being.

"Mental health is different per person. Losing motivates me. After a loss, all I want to do is get into the gym and work on my craft," Batezel said. "I want to win more than anyone, but I also understand that my teammates might react differently, so I just try to make sure that I'm always there to listen and step into that supporting role."

While the team may have endured a losing streak in previous years, the players and coaches know they can't let that attitude bleed into the next game. All pressure and doubts have to be left at the door once they enter the court.

"We make sure that practice is the best part of their day," Lawrence said. "The second they walk through that door, they're able to see their best friends, and all the stress from the day just goes away. It's agonizing to lose, but practice is where we are able to learn from our mistakes."

Making mistakes and embracing them means you're a part of the team.

"We have to realize that the losses don't define us," Batezel said. "We've lost games where we know we could execute greatness. Volleyball is a game of mistakes, and just tweaking them can make or break a team."

While the team wants to start bringing in wins to boost its spot in the rankings, it's also doing it for the broader Missoula sports fans, to show younger kids that volleyball can be a fun and rewarding sport.

"It feels great to win, and I always hoped the Missoula community loved the team, no matter win or lose. It's more about the feeling of playing this game. While it feels nice to celebrate a victory post-match, we value that we still go out after losing and interact with the fans," Lawrence said.

As Griz volleyball works toward a potential title season, the team feels the sense of pride knowing it could prove its skeptics wrong.

"It's great to see the jump from last season and show all the hard work we've put in during the off-season. I'm sure people have second guessed us, but they can watch what we are doing and see the potential," Batezel said.

UM chess' fresh look

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In a large meeting room within the University Center, chess players from across campus come together for one of the new chess club's first meetings. The freshly minted organization has taken over for UM's previous chess club, which is now defunct, and hopes to bring a consistent playing space back to the school.

After UM's original chess club stopped hosting in-person events, sophomores Gavin Goicovich and Sam Lehr took it upon themselves to create a new organization to host meetings for chess players on campus.

Finance student and current club president Goicovich was interested in joining the chess club as a freshman last year and reached out to their email, but he received no response. Instead of giving up, he decided to create a new club with the help of Lehr, who studies social work at the University and serves as the group's treasurer.

"There used to be a chess club two years ago and they stopped being a thing," Goicovich said. "They all moved online."

Thankfully for the two men, much of the old club's structure remained in the ASUM system, which allowed an easier transition to a fresh organization. "I think this one was easier because a lot of the stuff was already set up," Goicovich said in comparison to those who might be starting clubs from scratch.

The new club meets every afternoons and has already drawn a number of members. Eight people showed up interested the second meeting, where some players showed up early to occupy themselves with friendly games before the official start time. Once the meeting was underway, Goicovich staged a loose tournament bracket where everyone played each other round robin style.

Games took place at a wide variety of chess sets, from beautiful wooden boards hand crafted in Finland to thin cardboard mats from Walmart, where players engaged in battle on the 64 squares. Some



Sam Lehr prepares for a match at a chess club meeting on Sept. 17.
DIEGO HERNANDEZ | MONTANA KAIMIN

play in complete silence, while others talk back and forth throughout the game.

The mock tournament was played with a time constraint of 10 minutes for each player, a limit that both Goicovich and Lehr like best.

"I feel like three minutes is fun to do between things, like just between classes.

But 10 minutes is probably my favorite to actually play a game," Goicovich said.

Lehr enjoys the format because he sees it as the ideal balance of a game that can be played relatively quickly while still allowing thoughtful moves and strategy.

The explosion of online chess has made the game more accessible than ever and allows players to sample all manner of

formats; from blazingly fast bullet chess, where games take less than two minutes, to daily chess, where players can take as long as 14 days for each move.

Chess's variety is only one part of its allure, though. Its difficulty also draws players. "It's really simple to pick up and play," Goicovich said. "[But it's also] really hard to master," Lehr said.

The strategy involved can be off-putting for some, but others thrive on the sheer amount of content a person can study. Goicovich usually opens his games with either the London system for white or the King's Indian defense for black. Both strategies take a less orthodox approach to the game, with the King's Indian in particular being a very unique opening.

For outsiders, the idea of a chess club might inspire images of highbrow elitists with little regard for newcomers or less skilled players. The reality of UM's new group couldn't be further from that vision. Co-eds in T-shirts share laughs after ideal moves and self-deprecating curses after blunders with sportsmanship and warmth.

Looking to the future, Goicovich and Lehr are working on gathering funding from ASUM to purchase new boards and clocks, which would make the club even more accessible to newcomers without equipment. They're also in the process of trying to officially join the United States Chess Federation, which would allow them to hold sanctioned events on campus.

Aside from procuring funding and doing paperwork, Goicovich said that the club is off to a smooth start. "So far it's really good, super nice. Just get together, play some chess games," he said about the community.

"Everyone is really nice too," Lehr said.

With a solid playerbase already growing and the possibility of exciting developments down the road, the future looks bright for the budding club. From the wreckage of an abandoned idea, fresh faces have built their new organization. The current chess club's path to existence has been winding one, but perhaps it's fitting for such a young group dedicated to such an old game.

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A mile on my feet

JACKSON MAILEY | PHOTOGRAPHER
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As a group of freshmen begin their hike on the M Trail, passing shoe-wearing hikers who stop and ask, “What are y’all doing?” The freshmen enthusiastically respond, “The Barefoot club! Come join!” True to the club’s name, none of them have shoes on.

The club was started by two freshmen, ZeeZee Baughman, from Springfield New Hampshire, and Aiden Harris, from Portland Oregon started the University of Montana’s Barefoot Club when they saw each other swing dancing barefoot at an event with Resonate Church.

“Aiden comes up to me and he’s like, ‘yo I really like that you’re barefoot,’” Baughman said. “We just had a conversation and he was telling me about how he really wanted to start a barefoot club.”

So the idea became a reality. Now co-presidents of the Barefoot Club, Baughman and Harris set up a stand at the Welcome Feast on Sept. 5.

“We made some flyers and talked to people about our toes,” Baughman said.

The group has met every Wednesday since the Welcome Feast, ready for a barefoot hike. Last Wednesday, the group gained a new member during their climb up Mt. Sentinel.

“I was already hiking up and I saw a bunch of people with bare feet, and I was like, I gotta join,” said new Barefoot Club member Carter Marshall.

Despite having only two meetings to its name, vice president Grady Porter thinks the community is already strong.

“It can suck to hike on these rocks, but everybody keeps you going, and it’s kinda hard to not have fun even with a little bit of pain,” Porter said.

The M Trail is steep and rocky, but it can be rewarding when you reach the top and see the view.

“It can be painful, you can step on some sharp rocks. I know I get a couple open wounds,” Baughman said. “But I think once you’re done hiking barefoot you feel very proud of yourself and proud of your feet.”

Overall, the main goal for Baughman is to “normalize toes.” She feels like there’s a “weird stigma” when it comes to feet and she wants people to embrace the “toe life.” The club’s motto is “Toe life or no life.”

“I really didn’t know much about it when I joined. I didn’t know what it was, and everybody reading this is probably going to be in those same shoes,” Porter said, “And I just tell them not to be scared to explore.”



The feet of co-president of the Barefoot Club ZeeZee Baughman after hiking up and down the M Trail barefoot on Sept. 17.



Barefoot Club member Westin Peterson raises his fist in the air after hiking up the M Trail barefoot.



Barefoot club members hike up the M Trail barefoot.



The Barefoot Club hikes back down M Trail.