

MONTANA KAIMIN

FOR THE *Love* OF CLUB

HOW ATHLETES OVERCOME SHOESTRING BUDGETS, LACK OF PRACTICE SPACE AND LEADERSHIP TURNOVER TO KEEP THEIR GAMES ALIVE

Story by Maxwell Johnson | Photos by Maddie Crandall



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Cover photo by Maddie Crandall

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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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emily.tschetter@umontana.edu
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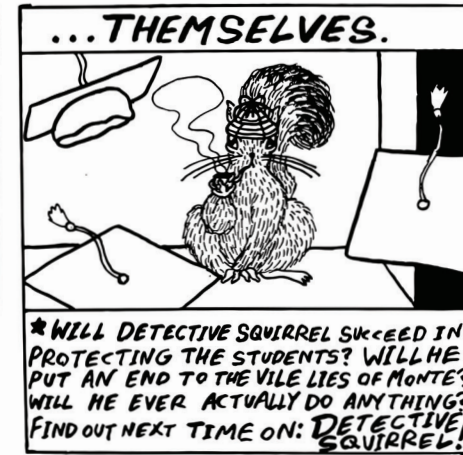
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DETECTIVE SQUIRREL: SE 1 EP 14



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

BARRETT

SUDOKU Edited by Margie E. Burke

Difficulty: Medium

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

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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:

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

New forestry building... promises progress, but at what cost? is exactly what we need

As a student in UM's ecology program, I understand the need for a new forestry building. But as someone with two years left at UM, I also understand the need for space, of the quiet and green variety. This project, fortunately, will not take up any more parking spaces, but will probably make campus aesthetically confusing and loud as hell.

The new forestry building, advertised as "Montana's Hub for Environment and Conservation," has been approved and is waiting on \$20 million in funding to begin construction, adding to the seemingly endless cycle of loud projects on campus. Students can't catch a break from UM trying to become as dystopian as possible to catch up to Bozeman's enrollment.

The building will be located between the Davidson Honors College, Main Hall and right next to the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, a place many students use to survive finals week. At this point, many dorm-dwellers have probably grown used to the sounds of construction at 5 a.m., but now where will students study away from the chaos? There's a reason a huge chunk of the 120+ comments on the U's Instagram announcement gripe about the location.

Despite being the hub for the College of Forestry and Conservation, the new building will require many trees to be cut down for construction. UM's website advertises a modern block-like structure made of cross-laminated timber (a low-impact material). The building alone is not hideous, per se, but sharing the Oval with UM's older, red-brick buildings, it will stick out like a sore thumb.

UM is landlocked for room already and it seems like it's cramming this building wherever it deems fit. With 60,000 feet of classrooms, labs and other gathering spaces for students, the new forestry building will be almost as tall as Main Hall. Understandably, UM wants to modernize its campus, especially for successful programs like wildlife biology and forestry. But it feels like it's getting to the point where it's disrupting current students' learning experiences, all while halting progress on buildings that need renovations (cough cough Charles H. Clapp building).

At the very least, UM needs to get its priorities straight by updating its older buildings before all of campus becomes a construction zone, rather than bragging about the groundbreaking American Disabilities Act compliance of new ones (as if it's an accomplishment and not just barely meeting modern standards).

-Haley Yarborough, Arts and Culture Editor

As a student in the wildlife biology program, which will live in the new forestry building, I think the update is long overdue and will only increase the draw for the nationally high-ranking school. The ecology school is ranked number five in scholarly productivity in influential ecology journals and number one in the United States and Canada for its wildlife biology program, both of which are housed in the college. The building needs to reflect UM's success in these fields.

The biggest gripe students seem to have with the building is the design and disruption of the aesthetic of the campus as a whole. Does that really matter in the grand scheme of things though? Is the aesthetic of the University of Montana campus the reason you chose the school, or was it the programs it offered?

For me, it was the wildlife biology program and atmosphere of Missoula itself. And having to take classes inside the current forestry building, which was built in 1922, I think it's time for a new one. Now, don't get me wrong, I enjoy the current historical feel the school brings, but I would really like to have some air temperature control in the building and windows that actually work.

The new building has already received \$25 million from the state and will get the last \$20 million from donors, not using any of the students' tuition dollars at all, despite what many may think. This will also be UM's first college building to be completely Americans with Disabilities Act compliant, another thing that is long overdue for UM and will be another draw for student enrollment.

The building will also be environmentally friendly, cutting down on costs overall, and is planning to get a LEED certification, a stamp of environmental prestige. Plus, within the 60,000 square foot building, new classrooms, labs and gathering spaces will be added to the school, increasing a community sense within the college. This will also add spaces where weekly lectures can be held, which right now have to take place in other school buildings that can hold more than 45 people in a room.

We can hate on the design all we want, but in the end, what matters most is the functionality and accessibility of the building for one of the biggest money-makers for UM.

-Mackenna Gleave, Design Editor

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Briefs & Blotter

Wyss scholars named, UM works on tuberculosis vaccine, lawmakers vote against abortion initiative

ANDY TALLMAN

andy.tallman@umontana.edu

UM ANNOUNCES WYSS SCHOLARS FOR U.S. CONSERVATION

UM has announced this year's recipients of the Wyss Scholars Program for United States Conservation, which will pay for a quarter of a master's degree upfront and another quarter if the recipient gets a job in government or nonprofit conservation.

The program is funded through the Wyss Foundation.

This year's scholars are Hannah Adkins, Sidney Fellows, Aylan Lee, Kelsey Phillips, William Rose, Amishi Singh and Meridian Wappett.

Adkins received her undergraduate degree at Miami University in Ohio, and joined UM's master's program with a focus on watershed health. Fellows comes from Idaho State University and has worked extensively with tribal and nonprofit organizations. Lee is a current UM law school student who hopes to engage with public interest as a lawyer after graduation.

Phillips is a former Montana Conservation Corps team leader who's committed to recreation management. Rose is a UM law school student who hopes to become a conservation nonprofit attorney. Singh, who was raised in Texas, became interested in how science influences policy after moving to the Pacific Northwest. Wappett, another UM law student, aims to work as a public interest environmental lawyer in government or nonprofit.

UM RESEARCHERS MAKE STEPS TOWARD A BETTER TB VACCINE

Montana researchers are playing a key role in developing a new vaccine against tuberculosis, the second deadliest infectious disease behind COVID-19.

There is only one vaccine against tuberculosis that is 40% to 80% effective in children, compared to the measles vaccine's 95% effectiveness, and loses efficacy in adolescents and adults.

The University of Montana Center for Translational Medicine is aiding the effort for an improved vaccine through research on novel adjuvants, according to the Montana Free Press. Adjuvants are substances such as fat molecules or aluminum salts added to

a vaccine to enhance the immune response. Novel adjuvants are substances that haven't been used in human vaccines yet.

Jay Evans, director of the center and co-founder of the biotech company Inimune, said his team has been working on this TB vaccine for 15 years, and it may be ready for wide distribution in as soon as five years.

The new TB vaccine, known as M72, is currently undergoing clinical trials administered by The Bill and Melinda Gates Medical Research Institute. It is one of around 15 new TB vaccine candidates being developed, and uses a molecule from the bark of a Chilean pine tree as an adjuvant.

The M72 vaccine is 50% effective, an improvement over the current vaccine. Evans said there's still room for improvement, and they're aiming for 80% efficacy or more.

REPUBLICAN LAWMAKERS PASS SYMBOLIC VOTE AGAINST ABORTION BALLOT INITIATIVE

The Republican members of the Montana Legislature's Law and Justice Interim Committee gathered April 18 to hold a vote against an abortion rights initiative that could appear on the ballot in November. However, an April court order found the Legislature's ruling would have no impact on the initiative's signature-gathering campaign.

This marks the latest move in the ongoing legislative battle over CI-128, an initiative advanced by abortion rights groups that would explicitly include the right to abortion in the Montana Constitution. The initiative has faced consistent pushback, but has advanced to the signature-gathering stage still.

Organizers of the CI-128 campaign did not attend the committee hearing, calling it "the-

ater," according to Montana Free Press. The hearing was primarily attended by opponents of the initiative, who voted to keep it off the ballot.

The CI-128 initiative must gather 60,000 signatures by June 21 to appear on the November ballot.

CONSERVATION GROUPS SUE TO RESTORE WOLF PROTECTIONS

A coalition of 10 conservation groups filed a lawsuit on April 8 against the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of the Interior to restore protections for gray wolves in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming.

Both Montana and Idaho are two states where the Endangered Species Act doesn't protect gray wolves against hunting. Republican supermajorities loosened hunting restrictions in the 2021 legislative session, which preceded a decline in gray wolf populations in both states, according to the Daily Montanan.

The lawsuit claimed both states are using "shoddy" science to justify decreasing the population rapidly through hunting, which would result in lower genetic diversity.

The integrated patch occupancy model, or iPOM, currently used to estimate wolf populations in Montana is an issue in the lawsuit. The lawsuit uses new 2023 research to argue this model is biased and fundamentally flawed, echoing issues found in a 2021 study. The suit also argues Idaho's method of measuring wolf populations is flawed.

The lawsuit concludes that, while current wolf population levels are not yet critically low, the loss of genetic diversity will lead to long-term damage to the wolf population.

POLICE BLOTTER

ANDY TALLMAN

andy.tallman@umontana.edu

Well, this week was a doozy. Between deer hunts, a bike miracle and the usual theater kids shenanigans, the University of Montana Police Department had quite a few calls to respond to. It seems everyone's done studying for finals and is now fully committing to causing problems. Focus your energy, guys. If all the classrooms get super-glued shut, we can't take our finals ... right?

FRIDAY, APRIL 12 - ANIMAL INSTINCT

At 1:20 a.m. on Friday, UMPD got called because a dog by Cinnabar Drive was chasing a deer. By the time officers arrived, the owners had regained control of their animal, who was not successful in its hunt. All that AND it didn't even catch anything? Skill issue.

FRIDAY, APRIL 12 - MIRACLE OF MIRACLES

Blah blah, stolen bike, yada yada. About 1 p.m., near the east entrance of Craig Hall, worth \$900, no video, no suspects, whatever. You've seen this all before...OR HAVE YOU? Because something incredible happened four days later: On April 16, the bike was ACTUALLY RECOVERED! Missoula Police Department found the stolen bike and returned it since the owner had registered its serial number. It's time to make a wish and buy lottery tickets, folks. Mercury must be in Gatorade or something.

SATURDAY, APRIL 13 - EQUIVALENT EXCHANGE

At around 2 a.m., Missoula Police Department called UMPD downtown to help a drunk college student get a ride back to campus. UMPD did give him a ride — and also a MIP citation, since he was underage. Definitely more expensive than calling Uber.

SUNDAY, APRIL 14 - YES, AND...

At 11:21 a.m., UMPD got a harrowing call — screaming and crying in front of the Schreiber Gym. Multiple people, too. But it wasn't a case of cult sacrifice or rabid badgers on the loose. When UMPD showed up, they quickly realized it was just an acting class. That class better get all As, since apparently they're very convincing.

SUNDAY, APRIL 14 - MOUNTAIN I'D LIKE TO FLEE

At 9:30 p.m., a group partaking in a nighttime M trail hike called UMPD stating they'd come across a cougar. Said cougar left quite quickly, requiring no further action. Apparently, UMPD doesn't get calls about cougars much. Which makes sense. Your mom is usually quite well-behaved.

TUESDAY, APRIL 16 - UNFORGIVABLE SIN

At 1:30 p.m., UMPD got a call about someone harassing the Missoula College osprey nest with a drone, but was unable to find any drone on the scene. We can think of a few reasons why. Perhaps the drone was struck down by a just god. Perhaps vigilante justice was done. Or perhaps Iris the osprey herself killed the dastardly device. Whatever happened, we cheer for the drone's destruction.

JOIN TODAY

RUGBY GRIZ WOMEN'S CLUB

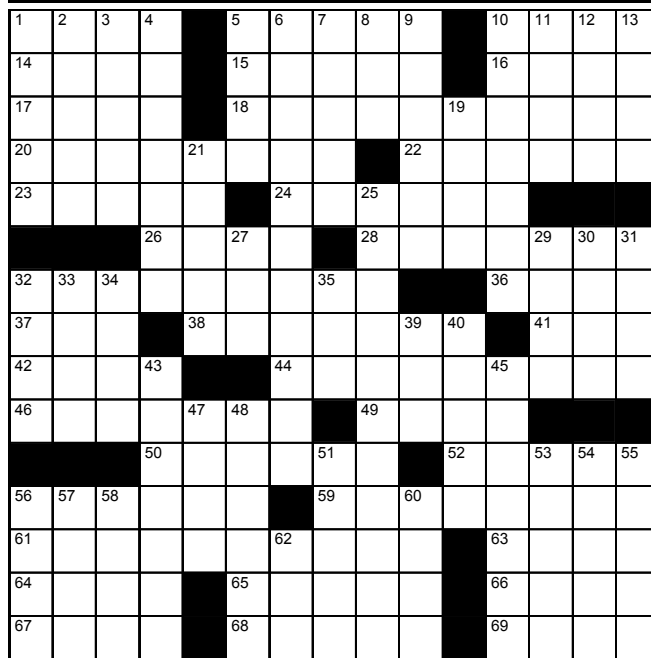
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The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke



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ACROSS

- 1 Go to and fro
5 Ski slope
10 Witch's blemish
14 Matinee ____
15 Hepburn film, "Wait ____ Dark"
16 Word after rush or happy
17 PBS science series
18 English rock group?
20 Ditchdigger
22 City NW of Milan
23 Brawl
24 Wee-hours flight
26 Justice's garb
28 To the degree that
32 Chemical reaction phenomenon
36 Jazz singer Simone
37 NAFTA signatory
38 Progress delayer
41 Rock's Bon Jovi
42 Cocktail garnish
44 Bringing from abroad
46 Adopts, as a stray
49 Like some excuses
50 Thin, silky fabric
52 Schnozzes
56 Perfect pass
59 Outgoing officeholder
61 Nobel Prize category
63 Painter of melting watches
64 Puts to work
65 Enlarge a road

- 66 "The Blackboard Jungle" author
67 NFC West team
68 Bird feeder fill
69 Brooklyn five

DOWN

- 1 Pub servings
2 Love lots
3 Really, really want
4 Hyundai model
5 It may come to shove
6 Arousing attention
7 Mall component
8 Pewter component
9 "Stranger Things" girl
10 Atop which
11 First-rate
12 Hairpieces
13 Grove growth
19 Robert of "Airplane!"
21 Adds ice, maybe

- 25 Went missing
27 "Gotta run!"
29 Pacific island nation
30 Auth. unknown
31 Summoned, as a butler
32 Short
33 Home to the Himalayas
34 Armored vehicle
35 PC maker
39 Dove's sound
40 Danish currency
43 Dishearten
45 Walked-over
47 Fly like an eagle
48 Spouse's family
51 Give the slip to
53 Smooth-tongued
54 Showy display
55 Trapper's wares
56 Disparage
57 Galileo's birthplace
58 "Time" anagram
60 Department store department
62 Father's Day gift

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

KAIMIN SUTRA FOUR: Where you boning?

EMILY TSCHETTER

emily.tschetter@umontana.edu

Here's the sitch: We all need to feel something. ESPECIALLY since the end of the semester has it hard to even lift a hand to smack your partner's ass every once in a while. So what better way to bring some spice back into our lives than risking a criminal record by doing the ol' horizontal tango in an iconic public place? Get prepped, douched, protected and look to the stars to find your next lovemaking locale.

TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20): Your roommate brings that always-being-in-your-space type vibe to your dorm that your inner horny demons really don't like. So you've improvised a solution: A musty blanket in the tunnels underneath campus that you mask with metric shit tons of incense smoke. As our dear leader Chappell Roan says, you've got a wand and a rabbit, and it's time to exorcize that shit all on your own, self-sufficient queen.

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20): Streakers have always rubbed you the wrong way (wink wink.) They're overdone, they're not bold enough ... frankly, they're beneath you. So when football season comes around, you're perched and erect in the Washington-Grizzly Stadium tunnels with the team. When the cannons blow, you're ready to bust a nut and you run out to top your co-cumspirator in the endzone. Finishing before UMPD will be hard, but you're up for the challenge. :)

CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22): You take "ski bum" to the furthest possible stretch of the term. Skiing is your entire personality, so you want to edge on your edges. You practiced your snow angel technique on the bunny hill (look it up, it's a real position,) and now you're ready for a 360 cock-screw at Snowbowl. Just make sure y'all don't fall into the wrong crevasse on the way down.

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22): You're that bitch. You just HAVE to

assert your dominance with some hanky-panky smack dab in the middle of the Oval before you graduate. Legend has it that if you line up perfectly in the center, the clapping of your cheeks will echo across the entire campus. Only one way to find out!

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 22): You spent too much time putting your whole authorussy into Y/N x Markiplier AU fanfictions in 2014, and now your brain is broken, and you need to roleplay every sexual situation. What better way to do it than slipping on a pencil skirt and pumps and bending over a cubicle in the Kaimin office? (This is in no way an endorsement of this activity. Please, please, please, don't bone in our office.)

LIBRA (SEP. 23-OCT. 22): Girl, you're trashy AF, but you're also in touch with "nature." You think you're cool for hitting your third date with the "I know a place" and taking them to the goddamn Top of the World, smh! No, you're never going to see the aurora borealis surrounded by other high schoolers in Subaru Legacies, but you will see one light ... illuminating your titties, from a cop and through your window.

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21): Save a horse, ride a Stocks boy.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21): Your ass is grass, Sag. You've been in booty boot camp for too long, and lucky for you, your partner LOVES pegging you (as they should). Unlucky for you, they'll help you take it too far — up the ass, via the top of the clocktower, we mean. At least you'll cement yourself in the UM lore AND you'll do a great job cleaning up the rotting pumpkin pulp, that's for sure.

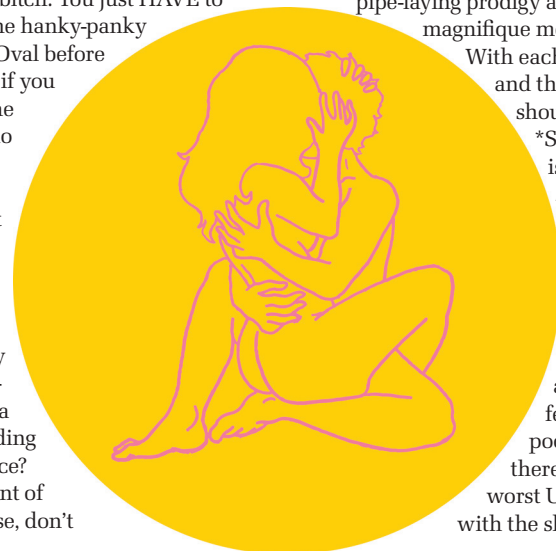
CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19): Road head is an art form. You've spent years studying the best angles, techniques and stealthiness, and you're finally ready for the greatest test in the state. Now you're on the way up Going to the Sun road, with your partner dodging deer and falling rocks while you get their rocks off. Hopefully your sloppy toppey gets you to the top.

AQUARIUS (JAN 20-FEB 18): You're like Icarus, and you fucked too close to the sun, honey! You and your lover strapped up with a strap-on and ran off the M on a paraglider. But just as you reach the apex, your gyrating has you spinning at top speed, and not in a sexy way, poor Aquari-baby. You'll need to prep a sincere apology for whomever's house your sweaty ass lands on.

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20): You're a slut, but more importantly, you're a musician and a scholar. You're a straight-up pipe-laying prodigy and you're compelled to share your magnifique melodies with the rest of campus.

With each thrust, the clocktower bells sing, and the gorgeous aria you compose should basically win you a Pulitzer. *Sniff sniff* classical music really isn't dead.

ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19): You simply must soak, but not in the Latter-Day Saints way. You're ready to fornicate in the forbidden liquid: the Berkeley Pit. With birds falling to their deaths around you and your skin actively melting off, you've never felt more alive, or closer to your pookie bear. Luckily, you won't be there to suffer the consequences of the worst UTI known to man — you're one with the sludge now.



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

Graduate employee union takes next steps toward negotiations

ELLE DANIEL
elle.daniel@umontana.edu

Sending the graduate employee union's negotiating letter to the University of Montana's administration on April 2 was years in the making, post-doctorate student Colette Berg said. Now the wait for official recognition begins.

Berg, 29, studies ecology and evolution while serving as an organizer of the graduate student union. The union's hope, along with voluntary recognition from UM, is to negotiate for higher wages and benefits like discounted tuition fees for graduate students working as teaching assistants or in other research roles. For many students, these increases would lift some of the burden of affording housing, food and healthcare.

The union formed in 2022, but organization began in 2021. Unionizing properly and legally took time. It hosted events and informational sessions to raise awareness. It collected signatures on petitions as proof of support from graduate students. Once it had 300 signatures, it recruited stewards, or representatives, from departments across campus and began passing out union cards.

Those cards, which certify membership, got the majority interest of grad students in order to file for official recognition with the National Labor Relations Board. Now, the union has submitted its letter to University administration and the wait for negotiations begins.

UM Spokesperson Dave Kuntz said while the University hasn't responded to the letter, it has been working behind the scenes to prepare the correct paperwork and petitions when a group unionizes on campus.

Official recognition will come from the Office of the Commissioner of the Higher Education and the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, not the University. Kuntz said it's too premature to say if negotiations will happen.

"I don't think it's as black and white from that original letter as the grad students made it seem," Kuntz said. "[The union] has to meet certain thresholds and work through the state." Kuntz did not have specifics on the paperwork currently in the work.

One of the letter's biggest asks is increased stipends. Currently, teaching assistantship salaries start at \$10,000 for a master's degree and \$16,000 for post-doctorates, according to graduate school dean Ashby Kinch. These stipends are often supplemented with grants and funding and vary per student. This means grad students

are not paid equally across the different departments.

The Kaimin called Kinch for comment on the Union's letter but did not hear back in time for publication.

A 2020 Kaimin article reported pay for teaching and research assistantships averaged roughly \$10,300 less than the national average. Back then, master's students made \$9,000 and postdoctoral students made \$14,800.

Along with raising wages, union members want to address the impact of tuition fees. These fees range from the Student Senate's to campus recreation fees. While some fees are fixed, like the \$30 registration fee, others depend on the student's course load. A teaching or resident assistant taking only one credit might pay \$815 total in fees, while a student taking 12 or more credits would pay around \$5,294. The full list can be found on the University business services website.

Berg estimated paying roughly \$1,300 per semester in fees. "Coming in from the summer, living on a narrower budget already, and then needing to just cover \$1,300 has been a horrible time, every time," she said.

Studying, researching and teaching can be a difficult tightrope to walk. Ezra Mendales, a 30-year-old graduate student and union member, studies high-elevation mammals as part of his ecology and evolution doctorate along with teaching classes.

"Teaching takes up a ton of time," he said. "You're supposed to be working eight hours a week...you could be teaching two four-hour classes and then you have no extra time allotted in that to be grading or preparing for lectures."

Berg, who teaches at the Rocky Mountain Flora Lab and a botany lab at UM, said safety is another concern. "There's very little you can do if something goes wrong," she said. "There's not a lot of protections for TAs and RAs that are specific to TAs and RAs."

Neither Berg nor Mendales mentioned specific situations in which graduate employees experienced safety issues.

Kuntz said unions are often comprised of members from multiple campuses across the state, so negotiations happen through OCHE rather than one particular campus. Deputy Commissioner for Government Relations and Communications with the Montana University System Galen Hollenbaugh said, "OCHE looks forward to working with the graduate students when they finalize their organizational efforts."

Berg said everyone who has signed union cards is a graduate employee at UM. A democratic election process will select union

representatives to go to negotiations, according to Berg. They'll be assisted by Tammy Harris from the Montana Federation of Public Employees. MFPE represents workers employed through government agencies. At the time of the interview, the union had not heard from the University about negotiations. Berg declined to comment on whether the University had responded to the letter.

Other students, like Bethany Miller, a 27-year-old studying pharmaceutical science and drug design, said they're often working as teaching assistants for all four to five years of the program, unlike others that only require one year of teaching. Despite the time requirement, Berg and Mendales said they still enjoyed teaching. "I get a lot out of it...with the amount of work that goes into it, sometimes it's hard to balance all these things," Mendales said.

According to Berg, the union on campus takes inspiration from the graduate student union at Montana State University. "The fact that they unionized in [2011] was super inspiring to us," she said.

After several appeals by MSU to the Montana Labor Board, and a 20 month legal bat-

tle, the University officially recognized the Graduate Employee Organization in 2011, and it won its right to bargain. UM union leaders keep in contact with the president of MSU's union for advice.

That advice includes writing its constitution. Berg said the union is modeling its constitution off of MSU's version. It plans to elect a president, vice president and treasurer. Until then, and until it's recognized, there is no official union leadership.

Berg and other members decided to unionize instead of working with the ASUM-recognized Graduate Student Association. They preferred acting as a collective bargaining group. "We think we are way more powerful if we stand together as workers," Berg said. "That said, we're super excited...and on the same side of literally any group that's trying to improve lives for grad students."

Berg joined in the organization efforts in 2021. Many of the students she worked with to raise unionization efforts have since graduated, and she hopes to graduate herself next semester. "I'm really excited to pass it on," Berg said.

BIGGEST DEMANDS OF THE UNION:

- ★ Increased baseline wages
- ★ Partially-waived fees
- ★ Better safety protections and conflict resolution

MACKENNA GLEAVE | MONTANA KAIMIN

Former UM student to host town hall for Deaf community

CLAIRE BERNARD

claire.bernard@umontana.edu

When Eliza Kragh started in the University of Montana's graduate counseling program, she wanted to do the same things her classmates did. But after Kragh struggled to find proper accommodations for her disability, she dropped out of the program.

Now Kragh wants to create change for herself and other deaf students with a town hall on April 27, where deaf Missoulians are invited to discuss issues with equity regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act at the University.

"We want our community to recognize and acknowledge that we're here," she said. "And to ask [deaf individuals] what we need for equity to be provided instead of making decisions for us."

Currently, three students who identify as deaf and 13 who identify as hard of hearing are registered with the Office for Disability Equity on campus, according to Amy Capolupo, director of the ODE.

Beyond issues Kragh had with finding a deaf supervisor for an internship during the Fall 2023 semester, she said the University does not have enough language interpreters available.

One example of this, she said, happened at a panel put on by the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center that Kragh and a friend, who is also deaf, attended last year. There, she claimed, they only had one person interpreting for three speakers who, after 20 minutes, became tired and started to make mistakes.

According to a 1998 study from the University of Geneva, most interpreters become "mentally fatigued" after 20 to 30 minutes of signing and the number of mistakes increases sharply. Most interpreting services suggest having multiple interpreters for longer events, especially if more than one person is speaking.

Kragh and Tessa Williams, a sophomore studying social work who is also deaf, said the University needs more interpreters and they should be paid more for the job.

Capolupo said the University currently has one full-time interpreter who is paid \$22 an hour. The University also contracts with four other interpreters in Missoula, and the office is looking into hiring another and will be upping the pay to \$35 an hour next semester. The average hourly pay for interpreters in Montana is around \$30, according to Zip Recruiter.

Beyond interpreters, Kragh said the

University needs to do a better job of putting captions on videos and other visual-related programming.

Capolupo said the ODE provides captioning services upon students' requests, but beyond that, other University events are the responsibility of other departments at UM, including the Information Technology Department, which uses a three-tiered system for captioning. The system prioritizes open public-facing information, like UM's homepage, then videos used frequently by professors, then specific one-off information, like a movie a professor shows in class once.

Capolupo also said most events, like theater performances, will have a night with captions available.

UM Spokesperson Dave Kuntz said the University always tries to provide captioning or interpreters for events, but "there are always shortfalls." Challenges like financial burdens and physical infrastructure can create barriers to full accessibility, he said, adding the University can "only make improvements when (it's) made aware of issues as they arrive."

Growing up as the only deaf person in Polson, Montana, Kragh communicated with her family orally through lip-reading and speech therapy. But it wasn't her language. Her language was American Sign Language, something UM stopped offering as a class in Summer 2020.

According to Cathy Off, chair of the School of Speech, Language, Hearing and Occupational Sciences, UM stopped offering ASL due to 2020 budget cuts of the College of Health, where the SLHOS is housed and ASL is taught.

"The only courses that were not required courses for our degree-seeking students were the ASL courses," Off said in an email to the Kaimin. "While we did not want to cut any courses, these were the only ones that would not delay matriculation for our degree-seeking students."

Williams wanted to take Latin instead of ASL, but ran into difficulties finding a trilingual interpreter. The ODE instead offered Williams a remote interpreting system, but Williams and Capolupo both acknowledged the remote system is not always reliable in emails between the two, provided to the Kaimin by Williams.

Capolupo told Williams she could also opt out of the language course, take ASL as her language requirement, test out as a bilingual student or make her degree an associates degree through Missoula College.

In the email, Capolupo said the process to prove a student is bilingual is not just for

students with disabilities, but is expected for all bilingual students. But Williams told the Kaimin that calling ASL is her second language did not recognize her Deaf identity, and proving English is her second language isn't possible due to fluency issues.

Williams has not decided on whether to take a different language or test out of ASL, as she said she feels both options are not the best solution for her.

"I'd rather fail at taking a foreign language instead of being dismissed and language exempt," Williams said. "I want to challenge myself rather than take the easy route."

According to Off, ASL will be brought back in the 2024-2025 school year for SIGN101 and SIGN201, and both classes will count as a language credit. All SLHOS instructors are required to have a minimum of a master's of science in speech, language and hearing sciences/communicative sciences and disorders, or in a related field as appropriate for the specific course.

The school has also hired a fluent and deaf ASL signer to help collaborate and co-teach with a hearing teacher for the Fall 2024 semester and teach the Spring 2025 semester.

But for Kragh and Williams, the constant self-advocacy can be exhausting.

"What about all the other deaf students who have been here or will be here?" Williams said. "[The University] needs to think five to 10 years from now, and change those issues before it's too late."

Williams said she struggled to outfit her dorm in Turner Hall with proper accommodations her freshman year. Turner, not fully ADA accessible, lacked two things Williams needed: A door knocker and a flashing smoke alarm.

Since Williams can't hear when fire alarms go off, alarms that flash a light can alert her if/when there's a fire or a fire drill. Similarly, a door knocker lights up when the door is tapped.

"People would have to text me and say, 'Hey, we're going to be doing a drill in five minutes,'" Williams said. "Or my friends would have to text me before they arrived, so I could be watching for them to come."

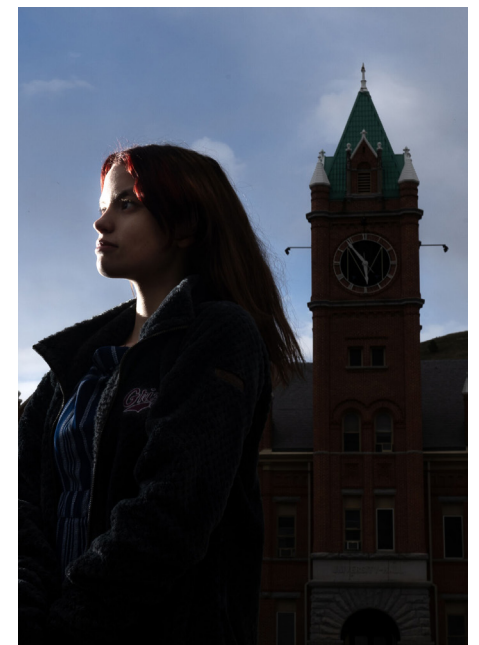
Williams said she never received the proper fire alarm and door knocker until she moved into Knowles Hall this year, which has both alert systems equipped.

Capolupo said while she can't talk about Williams' case specifically due to confidentiality rules, she emphasized that the ODE works to provide every student with accommodations they request for housing and works with the student and UM Housing to resolve issues

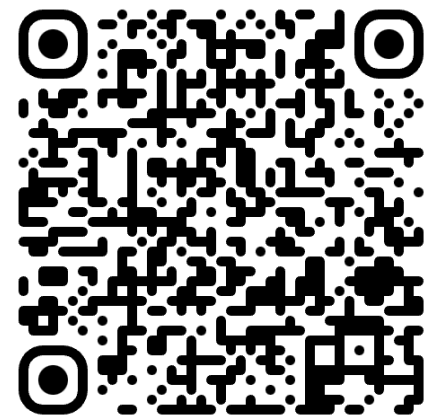
as they arise.

The town hall, put on by the Missoula Club for the Deaf, will be at 10:30 a.m. this Saturday at the Missoula Public Library, Cooper Room A. Both deaf and hearing individuals are encouraged to attend.

"The University has every resource that they need to be able to provide equity," Kragh said. "It just needs to start including the Deaf community in making those decisions. So our goal is that the University of Montana will recognize that."



Tessa Williams, a 19-year-old student studying social work at the University of Montana, said the University needs to make changes for future generations of deaf students. CHRIS LODMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN



Scan here to see Tessa sign her quotes in the article.

FOR THE *Love* OF *Club*

HOW ATHLETES OVERCOME
SHOESTRING BUDGETS, LACK
OF PRACTICE SPACE AND
LEADERSHIP TURNOVER
TO KEEP THEIR GAMES ALIVE

Story by Maxwell Johnson
Photos by Maddie Crandall



ABOVE: Ethan Lowe ties his shoes ahead of an April 13 double-header against Washington State University. **RIGHT:** Charles Nance catches a pitch from Kaden McDowell during the second of two games on April 13 against Washington State University. The Griz lost the first game 0-2 and the second game 15-17.



IT'S 9 A.M. ON A WARM Saturday on the outskirts of Bonner, Montana. The 20-odd men of the University of Montana club baseball team slowly trickle into Kelly Pine Field, making sure to park their cars as far away from the field as possible. They've all played long enough to see a windshield cracked by a foul ball.

Some holding coffee and others donning gloves, the players begin some light defensive practice. There's excitement in the air as the team's opponent in the day's double-header, Washington State University, rolls into the lot.

The UM team's 20-year-old president, Charles Nance, welcomes his opposite number from WSU, Joshua Waite, and the two crack a few jokes before preparing their teams for the game.

Nance catches a few light pitches from 22-year-old Griz Kaden McDowell, his long-time friend and pitching mate. The familiarity and quiet confidence McDowell and Nance share is obvious.

McDowell and Nance pour an average of 16 hours each week into UM's team on top of pursuing forestry and wildlife biology degrees at the University, respectively. The trips to Bonner and the searches for discounted equipment necessary to keep the team running can be tiring, but sometimes members see it pay off in big ways.

During a tournament in Las Vegas last month, McDowell came out of the bullpen against San Diego State University's club team. He knew he needed to raise the bar — especially since SDSU put up 20 runs in just two innings.

He wound up his 6-foot-1 frame and threw

some of the hardest pitches of his life. The first went wide of the strike zone and the batter didn't bite. He followed it up with a deceptive curveball that caught the batter swinging. He allowed three runners on base, but his arsenal of pitches locked out every SDSU run attempt that inning.

The team still lost — badly. It ended on a mercy rule with SDSU beating UM by 19 runs, not entirely unexpected given SDSU's status as a division above UM. But SDSU's coach David Acheron was impressed. Acheron is the general manager of the Dublin Leprechauns, a minor league professional baseball team that plays in the Pecos summer league.

He liked McDowell's game and offered him a chance to play pro for the summer, making McDowell the first player in the UM club team's history to ink a pro deal.

"It's definitely a dream that every baseball

player has," McDowell said. "I kind of gave up on the dream and then did [club baseball] to just keep playing, and that's what it's all about — just keep playing."

It takes the whole team to bring players like McDowell this success — while Nance does the bulk of the scheduling and paperwork, all 24 full-time members pay their dues, fund-raise and even pull weeds on the Bonner field where they host their games to keep their dreams on the diamond alive.

It's a labor of love solely for their shared passion for the game, and they persist despite usually having only a few dozen people in the crowd cheering them on. Since the University doesn't rally around club sports like baseball the way it does around NCAA-sanctioned sports like football, it's the price players pay as they tackle lackluster budgets, a complex funding system and a host of other challenges.

BY THE NUMBERS:

EVERY CLUB GETS \$3,350 FROM ASUM

Baseball:

TOTAL BUDGET:
\$20,000

EACH PLAYER
PAYS:
\$500

Lacrosse:

TOTAL BUDGET:
\$160,000

EACH PLAYER
PAYS:
\$3,000

Soccer:

TOTAL BUDGET:
\$6,000

EACH PLAYER
PAYS:
\$100

MACKENNA GLEAVE | MONTANA KAIMIN

ASUM101

Club sports at UM are part of and, in part, funded by the Associated Students of the University of Montana Sports Club Union, which includes 12 teams: ACHA Griz Hockey, Griz Lacrosse, Griz Club Baseball, Griz Club Soccer, Griz Women's Rugby Club, UM Smoke Jump (Men's Ultimate Frisbee), Montana Pillowfight (Women's Ultimate Frisbee), Woodsman Team, Grizzly Hurling, Griz Spikeball, UM Telemark Skiing Club and UM Rodeo.

Both ASUM and the Sports Club Union have several governing documents that teams must follow. The rules include having a team representative attend meetings at least once a month and submitting budgets by hard deadlines. Failure to do so can result in fines and teams being deprived of ASUM funding altogether.

The documents are also very specific about how money can be spent, which can make things particularly difficult for more niche sports like the UM Woodsman Team. Much of its equipment, like chainsaw oil, qualifies as "expendable goods" that cannot be reimbursed.

According to Alex Kaper from the Woodsman Team, Paige Mickelson from Griz Club Soccer and Nance from Griz Club Baseball, the money is rarely enough for a season's worth of travel and hotels. The woodsmen had to crowdfund the gas for one of its most recent trips to Idaho and camp outside in freezing temperatures.

"It really does make things difficult — some of the restrictions on funding and just the lack of funding," Kaper said. "On the flip side,

I'm deeply appreciative of the fact that when I've gone to the Senate with requests for items that will increase our safety, items that will increase survivability, they have approved that without blinking an eye."

ASUM's funding comes from a \$79 fee on every student's semester registration bill — \$59 of which goes into the Senate's yearly budget, which sat at \$1,065,750 in 2024. The remaining 20 dollars of the fee goes directly into the accounts of the Kaimin, KGBA, ASUM Child Care, and Experiential Learning Scholarships.

From there, some money is put aside for an administrative fund and a \$41,000 travel fund, which all ASUM-recognized clubs can pull from to pay for gas and other expenses. The remainder of the money is distributed to clubs requesting money. The Sports Club Union and Music Union request money as a whole rather than having each individual club under their umbrellas come forward with its budget. This year, the sports union received \$41,366, \$4,366 more than last fiscal year's \$37,000.

Then, the Senate looks at the budget and distributes the remaining funds into the clubs or organizations that it feels would benefit from it most. The sports union isn't eligible for any extra money ASUM distributes during the final budgeting of the Senate-wide pot.

Teams have had to get creative with the way they divide up their funds. For example, Bonner Elementary School gave the baseball team free use of Kelly Pine Field. However, it's up to the club to do all the groundwork and maintenance necessary to keep the facilities in shape.

"Last year, when we were given [use of]

it [for] the first time, I think we spent two weeks working on it," Nance said. "We've had entire practices where the whole team walked around the infield and picked weeds out of the dirt. It's been a lot of hours put in on our [end], but it's been a very beneficial situation for the club."

The sports union kept \$1,166 of the \$41,366 as a rainy day fund that clubs can pull from and had each team cast a vote on how to distribute the remaining cash.

The first option was a three-tiered system which divided the teams into groups based on their sizes and distributed the budget accordingly. A first-tier club like Griz Lacrosse might receive \$5,000 a year

while a smaller team like Spikeball might only receive \$1,000.

This system was used as recently as two years ago, but \$1,000 was simply not enough to build a traveling, competitive team. Instead, for the past two years, the union has voted for the other option and had its funding evenly distributed, with each team receiving \$3,350 this year.

For some clubs like Griz Spikeball, this amount can largely cover all the team bases. But for others like Griz Lacrosse, the ASUM funding makes up less than 3 percent of its \$160,000 annual budget. To keep up, the team's members pay \$3,000 a season just to join the team, and the rest of the difference is made up by donors. Baseball has a budget of around \$20,000, paid for through \$500 dues paid by each player and by team fundraising in addition to the ASUM money.

If this all sounds complicated, that's because it is, but many club presidents have credited ASUM office manager Gwendolyn Coon with helping them figure out the rules and restrictions.

"The baseball club would not exist without [Coon] and ASUM," Nance said.

ASUM's bylaws are intended to ensure the Senate's money is spent responsibly, which, in practice, results in them being very specific about what funds are used from what accounts. Most clubs have an account for ASUM money and an account of money they raise themselves. Coon said the number one way to help teams is to have them understand ASUM policies. From there, she can reimburse them for more at a faster rate, or help them work out alternatives.

Nance is one of her frequent visitors. He spends about eight hours a week finding hotels, arranging practice times and working through the weeds of these policies. Coon enjoys helping club leaders like Nance out.

"I get to work with the best and brightest students on campus," Coon said. "It's just really fun working with motivated individuals."

The leadership carousel

Navigating funding on top of practices and travel becomes even more complicated for club athletes with turnover in the union. The current leadership of the union consists of president Jacob Amend, treasurer Charles Nance and secretary Taylor Stark.

Union presidents are selected each semester. Amend, who is also the president of Griz Spikeball, entered his role in the spring of 2024 after the previous semester's president left the University without notice.

"We had a lot of changes in leadership," Amend said. "There was a girl that came in, her name is [Mickelson], she was the — kind of the catalyst of actually structuring everything."

Mickelson, the founder of Griz Club Soccer, served as the union's president in the spring of 2023, and she still works extensively with the union in her current position as student group coordinator.

Before Coon and Mickelson came in, in 2019 and 2021, respectively, the union interpreted its bylaws to be more like by-suggestions, Coon said. Communication between the clubs was minimal. Information such as how to reserve a field, who oversaw what in a club and how to set up a season schedule were all lost in the jumble of leadership changes and lack of in-person communication during COVID-19.

Hockey club, which is completely separate from ACHA Griz Hockey, has had its share of struggles in that area. The club has a women's and co-ed team that both play in the Glacier Ice Rink adult league.

After hockey's previous club president graduated without warning or parting words in 2019, Hunter Schmidt stepped into the role with no knowledge of how ASUM worked.

"I basically just came to ASUM, and I was like, 'Hey, I want to be part of the hockey club,' and they [were] like, 'Oh, it doesn't exist anymore because [the former leadership] didn't submit a budget, and they didn't hand over any of the paperwork or anything like that,'" Schmidt said. "So I tried to build it from the ground up, basically."

Schmidt filled the president, treasurer and faculty adviser positions necessary to start a valid club and complete the ASUM paperwork. He even began recruiting for the club by bringing a hockey net out into the Oval and having people shoot pucks. Although there was a lot of interest and sign-ups for the club, only about 20% actually showed up.



LEFT: Michael Roy watches the ball go up after he hit it during the second game of the double-header. **ABOVE:** Kaden McDowell rakes in front of the pitcher's mound at Kelly Pine Field in Bonner, where the Griz Club Baseball team plays.

Still, the club gained some traction and managed to host a few events, even renting out the ice rink and bringing in a coach to teach new players. But in 2021, as a member of the Army National Guard, Schmidt was deployed.

Other students and the club's faculty adviser kept the club going until he returned for spring 2023. But this year, the membership has decreased to around 14 players. The only two officers, Schmidt and the treasurer, are in their senior years.

Partially due to the scramble, the club missed budgetary meetings and did not receive any funding from ASUM this year, although they still actively play in the Glacier Ice Rink adult league and are open to new members. The club does have some money in its savings to hold it over until it can rejoin the union's payroll next year.

"I'm really trying to identify somebody who can step up to the plate and manage this club, because it's really cool when it's going," Schmidt said.

There doesn't appear to be a huge amount of interest in the position, however, as it requires a lot of energy to work with ASUM and Glacier Ice Rink that many students don't want to stack on top of their studies, jobs and recreation.

"There's just a requirement of a pretty consistent investment of time and energy to keep it going," Schmidt said.

Practice times

While club hockey has a consistent practice space in Glacier Ice Rink, most clubs are not so lucky. Teams often have to choose between practicing off campus at locations like Dornblaser Field or Fort Missoula in the afternoon, or on campus late at night or early in the morning.

Griz Club Soccer usually practices in Washington-Grizzly Stadium from 8 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. or drives 15 minutes from campus to Kelly Pine Field in Bonner to use the out-field earlier in the afternoon.

On-campus fields like Washington-Grizzly Stadium are generally rented out to club teams at a reduced rate, but the practice times are limited. It's not unusual to see a revolving door of clubs playing on the field from the early evening to past midnight. Missoula Parks & Recreation also has fields available, but club leaders like Mickelson have said that even with multiple voicemails and emails, they often take several days or weeks to respond.

Missoula Parks and Recreation communications specialist Becky Goodrich told the Kaimin they aim to respond promptly to requests and haven't had any complaints.

This issue is worsened by the construction of the University of Montana's new indoor football practice facility, nicknamed 'the dome,' which was built over a field previously

used by multiple club sports. The dome will offer some opportunities for club sports once completed, but for many teams, those opportunities will likely be outside their budgets.

According to UM Athletics Director Kent Haslam, once finished, the dome will be open for campus recreation Monday through Thursday, from 8:30 to 11:30 p.m.. Outside of these times, the field will mainly be reserved for the football team, then for the track and field athletes, despite there not being a traditional track in the facility.

Clubs may be able to work with UM Athletics to schedule additional times. Otherwise, the field will also be available for rent after 11:30 p.m. all week. Prime-time slots for the full field are estimated to cost somewhere between \$375 and \$525 an hour, although the field may also be available to rent in three separate sections, and the hourly price will decrease during less-optimal times like later in the evening.

"It sounds like they've already scheduled out days and times for all the teams, and then, you know, club sports is kind of like an afterthought ... I could not ask my team without pushback to practice from 11-12:30 at night," Mickelson said. "Which is a little frustrating because, you know, we go to Gonzaga, we go to Bozeman, we go to [the] University of Idaho [in] Moscow, and they all have these dedicated turf fields that are used for their student recreation."

Lacrosse coach and hockey general

manager Tucker Sargent has floated the idea of creating a club sports facility, but nothing concrete exists yet.

Why play club sports?

So why even play, or be the president of a club team in the first place, if you have to deal with all of the above and more?

It's because these students love the game they play and helping others play it.

"It's awesome to see guys get better. It's really cool to see us grow as a club and be able to compete at a higher level," Nance said. "From our beginning of 11 guys, to now over 30, we have the depth. We don't need to have a guy stand on the mound and throw until his arm falls off."

Even after getting swept in a three-game series against WSU, the team currently has a 9-4 conference record and 12-8 total record. This season, it's reached rankings as high as eighth out of over 100 teams in its league. It hasn't been an easy path to get there, but with a successful record and McDowell reaching pro heights, both Nance and McDowell said overcoming the obstacles as club athletes at the University has been worth it.

"There's no free swag, you don't get any cool perks," Nance said. "You're just a club baseball player, and you're really playing just because you love to play, and that's the reason why I'm still doing it. It's the reason why a lot of our guys are still doing it."

UM student to star as Belle in Missoula Community Theatre's 'Beauty and the Beast'

EMILY MESSER

emily.messer@umontana.edu

Back in action after 20 years, Disney's "Beauty and the Beast" will be coming to the stage of the Center for the Performing Arts at the Missoula Community Theatre from April 25 through May 12.

This production will feature many University of Montana students and alumni involved as crew, actors and live ensemble members. The lead, Belle, is played by Hallie Racicot, a freshman at UM studying musical theater.

"I've learned a ton in the theater program so far that is helping me apply myself to this character," Racicot said. "So it's really interesting getting to sort of work with a community theater on a semi-professional level and also learn with all these wonderful instructors from the U."

Racicot has been participating in MCT performances since she was 5. And after being a nursing major for a year, she decided to return to her love of theater earlier this school year.

"I just loved it so much. I think I've done, like, 30 children's theatre performances before I upgraded to the community theatre," Racicot said.

"Beauty and the Beast," originally published as a fairy tale, in 1740, tells the story of a prince cursed under a spell that turns him into a beast. Belle is imprisoned in the beast's castle, and to become a prince, he must fall in love with Belle before the final petal falls from the a magical rose.

Racicot is excited to take on the role of Belle after two months of learning the music and scenes. This is her first lead protagonist role, a task Racicot said is nerve-wracking. Racicot said she "pretended to be very grown" in rehearsals, as one of the younger cast members, but said the cast is very supportive. "I feel like I'm faking it 'til I make it, but it's so fun, and I'm really excited," Racicot said.

Artistic director Joseph Martinez first brought this Broadway musical to MCT during the 2004-2005 season. He said he's now excited and more comfortable to bring it back as the theater's season finale.

"But we're not creating the same show," Martinez said. "We're doing a completely different show because it's different actors. It's different designers. Everything's different — different choreographers. My thing is to make sure that I don't tell the exact story I told 20 years ago."

Disney's "Beauty and the Beast" is family-friendly, and as the season finale, Martinez is expecting a great turnout for the performance. MCT will also enhance the production by including a live orchestra, coordinated by the music director Gregory Boris.



Starting from left to right, Trent Taylor (Lumiere), Nathan Poukish (Beast), Jack Broadway (Cogsworth) and Sam Stuart (Maurice) pose for act two, scene two on April 16 when the Beast returns from fighting the wolves. This scene was a part of the upcoming play of "Beauty and the Beast" at the Missoula Community Theatre, running from April 25 through May 12. **CHRIS LODMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN**

Martinez has a strong background in theater, with 30-plus years of experience working in Arizona, Utah, Ohio, Korea and Japan. He graduated from Southern Utah University with a degree in directing and marketing.

MCT's connection to UM is a priority for Martinez. He said, depending on the show, the University can draw in multiple students, which helps build the community and connections in the business.

"Our whole mission is to develop skills in not only children, but also in adults, and to also create a community," Martinez said. "And that's kind of what we do every time we do a show. And when we are able to use University students, it just gives us that spread just across the river."

Showings for "Beauty and The Beast" last from April 25 through May 12. Tickets for this Disney classic can be found at MCTinc.org or through the MCT box office.

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Gallery | 'For the people'

55th annual Kyiyo Pow Wow, in portraits

PHOTOS BY MONTANA KAIMIN PHOTO STAFF

At the core of the Kyiyo Pow Wow is a space bursting with tradition, including a wide array of people from multiple tribes, their families and their friends. The Kaimin photo team set up a portrait booth as a backdrop for dancers to express themselves through photographs.

The powwow dancers were separated into groups based on age, gender and categories including Traditional, Fancy, Grass, Chicken and Jingle. Age groups ranged from Tiny Tots (ages 6 and under) to Golden Age (55 and up). Dancers were welcomed into the event with grand entry at 6:00 p.m. on the evening of Friday, April 19, and resumed the morning of Saturday, April 20.

Dancers of all ages performed throughout the event on Saturday past midnight. While this year's attendance numbers haven't been released, the Kyiyo Pow Wow had record-breaking attendance last year and serves as an opportunity for tribal members from various communities to express their identities in a safe and inclusive environment.

Additional reporting by Claire Bernard

Full gallery online at
montanakaimin.com

BOTTOM LEFT: Sharissa Couture, 19, of Crow and Kootenai descent, wears a traditional elk tooth dress. "Today is for the people," she said.
AVA ROSVOLD | MONTANA KAIMIN

BOTTOM MIDDLE: George Meninick Jr., of the Yakama Tribe, dances the Mens Traditional at the Kyiyo Pow Wow.
RENNAL-HAJ | MONTANA KAIMIN

BOTTOM RIGHT: Mariah Whiteman Runs Him performs in the Traditional Crow event during the Kyiyo Pow Wow. She is a part of the Crow Tribe and her favorite part of the weekend was hanging out with her friends and family and seeing everyone all together.
RENNAL-HAJ | MONTANA KAIMIN



TOP LEFT: Miss Crow Nation 2024, Michaiah Pease, holds an eagle feather fan made by her grandfather. Pease says she is proud of her people and her culture and has been dancing Crow Style for the past eight years. **TOP RIGHT:** Miss Crow Nation, Michaiah Pease. **AVA ROSVOLD | MONTANA KAIMIN**





TOP LEFT: From left to right, Watson Whitford, 18, Dustin Whitford, 42, and Gordon Whitford all performed Men's Prairie Chicken dance at the Kyiyo Pow Wow. They are all Chippewa Cree from the Rocky Boy's Reservation. **AVA ROSVOLD | MONTANA KAIMIN** *RIGHT:* Sarah Cochran, Báæðoch, attends the Salish Kootenai College and is A'aniih. Cochran said she did not compete during the Kyiyo Pow Wow, but loves to see everyone gathered together. **RENNAL AL-HAJ | MONTANA KAIMIN**



ABOVE LEFT: Skyej Beasley, 17, from the Fort Hall reservation, performed the Traditional dance with his favorite deer hooves on both legs as rattles. **AIDEN HAVENS | MONTANA KAIMIN** *MIDDLE:* Robert Tewawina Jr. dances in the Grass dance at the Kyiyo Pow Wow. **RENNAL AL-HAJ | MONTANA KAIMIN** *RIGHT:* Starry Knight is of Crow descent from Hardin, Montana, and said the powwow was very well-organized. **CHRIS LODMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN**

From injury to inspiration: UM dance team's unforgettable national premiere

HOPE MORRISON

hope.morrison@umontana.edu

In the University of Montana's dance team's competition, debut sophomore Madeline McKinnon slid to the front of the stage to jump down onto her knees as a part of their rehearsed routine. But this time, "something wasn't right." With tears in her eyes, McKinnon had just torn a major muscle in her knee, yet continued to dance. She said she thought to herself, "There is no way I'm coming off this stage."

The lights shined down on UM's dance team at the 2024 College Classic Nationals competition in Orlando, Florida, last week. This was the first time the UM dance team, or any collegiate-level Montana dance team, had ever gone to a competition, let alone at the national collegiate one.

On stage, McKinnon described feeling overwhelmingly proud of her team for making it.

"There's a lot of talent [in dance] here in Montana," McKinnon said.

In the moment right after busting her knee, McKinnon said she fought through the pain because she "wanted this routine to really show people what Montana can do."

"Obviously, my teammates would never have been upset with me if I went off stage," McKinnon mentioned, explaining that her teammates' hard work and dedication were one of the many things that motivated her to keep pushing through the pain. She finished the preliminary routine, then performed in the second routine that night and finals the next day while dealing with the injury.

"We had a job to do," she said, "I wasn't going to make us choreograph or reformat everything because I knew how much time and effort everybody put into this."

Like many of the dancers on the team, captain Andi Newbrough has been dancing since she was 4 years old, and competed up until her senior year in high school. However, she left competition behind after committing to UM's dance team to focus on game day spirit performances at football, volleyball and basketball games.

"When it comes to game day [performances], we all dance the same, but we all have our own flair and style with it," Newbrough said. "You lose the individuality and become more of a group member and a teammate than you would ever be on a sideline."

Every year, the current team members are expected to try out for the team along-

side new or upcoming freshman recruits and are not guaranteed a spot. Throughout the season, the girls also compete with each other for better spots on the court or field for their game day performances.

"Going to nationals, we were all fighting for one goal, rather than fighting for our spot on the team," McKinnon said, noting that she felt the bond between the girls grow stronger than it was her freshman year.

Newbrough was grateful for the opportunity to dance in a team rather than as an individual after four years away from competing. While the team's freshmen and sophomores had only spent a year away from competition, "the seniors and juniors — we all had a hard time getting back into it, but we all did a great job supporting each other and keeping our eyes on our big goal," Newbrough said.

The girls' bond did not go unnoticed during the debut of the team at nationals.

"We had a couple outside eyes on us who got to see our program close up," she said.

McKinnon mentioned that before going on stage for their final performance a passerby complimented them on how strong their connection was."

The team rehearsed their national routine since October, putting in nearly 12-14 hours of dance every weekend on top of balancing their academics, off-campus jobs and social life.

Newbrough describes a week in her life as "Practice Monday. Practice and lift Tuesday. Practice Wednesday. Lift and game on Thursday. Friday off. Game Saturday. Long practice Sunday."

With the hard work and dedication they put in, injuries were not uncommon for the team. Newbrough struggled with a syndrome known as "dancer's hip," which she describes as one tendon incorrectly snapping over one of her hip bones. Newbrough mentioned that "dancer's hip" is common across her team, as well as other joint issues.

"The hip is supposed to be one of the strongest joints in your body, and I need it to be the most flexible joint in my body," Newbrough said.

McKinnon, on top of her late-season knee injury, also dealt with a herniated spinal disc due to the sheer amount the team practiced.

To make it to nationals, the team had to make plenty of sacrifices not only in their personal lives, but financially, too. Dance at UM is not an NCAA-recognized sport. However, the University of Montana recognizes the team, allowing it the same benefits as the other NCAA sports on campus, such as access to the champion center, personalized



The University of Montana dance team kicks off the start of a pep rally on the Oval during homecoming week on Sept. 29, 2023. **AVA ROSVOLD | MONTANA KAIMIN**

strength coaches, the nutrition center, and the student-athlete academic center. But the team receives no funding for practice gear or jerseys from the University, leading the dancers to pay upward of \$700 each season. The team also cannot receive any funding from other sources such as ASUM, as they are not considered a club. According to McKinnon, even after fundraising, she ended up paying upward of \$2,000 out-of-pocket to pay for the travel, registration and other expenses to be able to compete at nationals.

For Newbrough and McKinnon, all of the hard work and sacrifices made were worth making it to nationals. For its debut, Newbrough explained that the team was not

expecting to place as high as it did. With tears in her eyes, she said to her coach while waiting for scores, "Honestly, I would be so ecstatic to be within the top 10, so to place within the top five, let alone the top three, was crazy."

Competing in two categories, Game Day Spirit and Jazz, the UM dance team took home two trophies for its third- and fifth-place finishes alongside Monte, who took second in the national college mascot championship. "I could not be more proud of the dance team with the amount of work and dedication they put in," Monte told the Kaimin via Instagram DM. "They performed amazingly and gave a spectacular showing."

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