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NATIONWIDE
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AMONG COLLEGE
STUDENTS

STORY NIAMH O'FARRELL
PHOTOS BY EMBRY ERICSON

COVER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION
BY LILY PETERSON



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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."

POLITICAL CARTOON



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KAIMIN KOMICS: #2 WHY ARE YOU HERE?



It's time Washington-Grizzly Stadium expanded

When Washington-Grizzly Stadium is packed for a Griz football game, it becomes Montana's seventh largest city. The University of Montana's stadium is the biggest in the state and the Big Sky Conference, with an official capacity of 25,217. Nearly every game sells out, and then some. The current record capacity is 27,340, set during last November's rivalry matchup against Montana State University.

With these numbers in mind, it's time Washington-Grizzly Stadium expanded. This year, the Griz sold 19,589 season tickets, or about 78% of the stadium's capacity. That means, theoretically, there's only 5,628 incidental fans at each game.

Wa-Griz opened in 1986, with an original capacity of about 15,000. Since then, it's expanded three times, adding end zone seating in 1995, seats in the northeast and northwest corners in 2003 and the east side upper deck in 2008.

The best place for an expanded section would be in the southeast and southwest corners, which currently hold makeshift folding bleachers, to mirror the north side of the stadium.

Of course, expansions like this cost a pretty penny. The 2008 expansion, which added 2,034 seats, cost \$6.5 million, according to Griz Athletics.

But Griz athletics are a major driver of Missoula's economy, generating more than \$94 million in revenue for local businesses annually, according to a 2025 report by UM's Bureau of Business and Economic Research. Visitors spend an average of \$5.2 million in Missoula County each football weekend.

The UM community is very loyal to their Griz, which creates an unmatched atmosphere in the stadium. The stands are always packed, the dance team, cheer squad and marching band bring high energy and opposing teams are often overwhelmed by the decibel levels.

As a result, this summer, USA Today named Missoula the best college sports town in America in a reader poll, beating out towns that host universities many times UM's size.

The average attendance for a Griz football game last season was 26,464, putting UM miles ahead of the rest of the Big Sky Conference and Football Championship Subdivision and even above the average of the nearby Mountain West Conference, a member

of the higher-caliber Football Bowl Subdivision.

It'd be a huge jump, but our football program and fans deserve a stadium with 30,000 seats. The Griz certainly have the demand for it – UM football games are the biggest sporting events in Montana, especially when the matchup is against MSU. And even at that capacity, I'd wager we'd still sell out nearly every game.

*- Mariah Henry, Copy Chief
Like it? Hate it? Let us know.*

Email us your opinions at
mariah.henry@umontana.edu

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

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

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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:

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

Just here for the weiners



Assistant director of catering and sustainability Colton Buford poses in a hot dog costume for a picture at the University of Montana's annual Welcome Feast on the Oval on Sept. 4. **JACKSON MAILEY | MONTANA KAIMIN**

In local news...

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MISSOULA MAIL SORTING MACHINE MARKED FOR REMOVAL

Plans to remove a letter sorting machine from Missoula's Postal Service distribution center have prompted concern from workers about slower mail delivery for the area.

The president of American Postal Workers Union Local 113, Shawn Harding, said that the union received a one-sentence notice on Aug. 24, which expressed the plan to remove one of the four letter sorting machines at the Kent Avenue Processing and Distribution Center, according to Montana Free Press.

"They think they can do more with less, and that's just not the case," he said. "The staff that is here is very stressed just trying to keep up."

Regional U.S. Postal Service spokesperson Janelle Briggs said that the machine's removal is scheduled for sometime in 2027. The removal is part of a regular workflow and equipment evaluation that aims to improve efficiency, according to a statement from Briggs.

According to Harding, the machine processes between 300,000 and 450,000 pieces of mail daily for a location that serves all of western Montana. He said that the machine is run by two operators per shift, meaning that up to six people could potentially lose jobs.

According to the USPS, less than three jobs will be impacted by the removal.

Harding expressed concern that the Postal Service might propose moving processing to Spokane or another location if the Missoula post office can't keep up without the machine.

COUNTY PROPERTY TAXES SET FOR COMING YEAR

Missoula County commissioners unanimously voted to approve a 3.25% raise in property tax revenues for the 2027 fiscal year on Sept. 4.

The impacts of this increase will vary for property owners based on structural changes made by the county last year, according to the Missoulian. The revenue as a whole will go up, but properties with a homestead exemption are set to see taxes decrease.

This change adds \$2.3 million in property taxes to the new budget, and

county officials said that they chose not to raise the taxes further, despite having the authority to do so.

"This is a prudent budget. I think this is a restrained budget," County Commissioner Dave Strohmaier said. "It is a budget that retains some level of capacity by way of taxing authority that we have not chosen to exercise this budget cycle, even though there is plenty of deferred maintenance and needs across Missoula County."

Chris Lounsbury, the county's chief administrative officer, said that much of the increase comes from cost-of-living raises for county staff and rising costs for the county's health care plan. Other requests for property tax funds are still ongoing, including proposals for a new taser contract for Missoula police and funding for two new positions at the clerk, treasurer and recorder's office.

The county increased property tax revenues by 8% last year.

NEW FACILITY EXPANDS HOUSING FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

The Poverello Center has opened a new housing facility for homeless veterans in Missoula, upgrading its existing program.

The Housing Montana Heroes program provides transitional housing to veterans for up to two years while case managers assist them to find permanent housing, according to Montana Free Press.

On Sept. 3, the Poverello Center opened a new space at the renovated former Clark Fork Inn, providing 16 new private studio units to the program, in addition to a community kitchen, community room, laundry facilities and offices for support services.

Jill Bonny, who serves as executive director for the Poverello Center, said that the program received an \$800,000 VA grant to start the project about five years ago, and then raised the rest of the \$6 million budget before breaking ground in August 2025.

According to Bonny, veterans will move into the building at the end of the month, but the program is seeking donations of towels, twin-sized blankets, toiletries, laundry baskets and coffee for welcome baskets. Donations can be delivered to the Poverello Center.



This week on the Kaimin Cast ...

As students return to the city and summer fades away, the Missoula community carves out a weekend for music, food, art and dancing.

The 20th annual River City Roots Festival brought together the local and university communities to connect and have fun. This year, the estimated 15,000 attendees were greeted by the rhythmic sounds of bluegrass music and the smells of an endless variety of food throughout the two-day event.

The festival helps welcome incoming and returning students to downtown Missoula. Strategically placed the weekend before school starts, students come to socialize, enjoy music and engage with locals.

"I love the dancing. I love seeing everyone out in the community. I just love seeing all the people I know. It's just nice to get back at the start of the school year," said senior Taylor McPherson, who has come to River City Roots Festival since her freshman year. "It's a welcome back party."

Tune in and learn more by checking out our latest podcast "Celebrating 20 years: Annual Missoula festival welcomes students back" on our website, montanakaimin.com.

- Grace Golbach and Miller Sebo,
audio editor and audio reporter



New Kaimin Cast
episode out this
week. Stay tuned.
Scan for the latest



GERMANY'S FAR RIGHT NOTCHES VICTORY IN CRUCIAL ELECTION

Germany's Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party won a crucial state election in resounding fashion on Sept. 6, just missing the majority required to become the first far-right party to govern part of the country since World War II.

AfD was looking to overcome Germany's longstanding firewall meant to prevent extreme parties from holding office and garner complete control over the state of Saxony-Anhalt, according to the Guardian.

Several other political parties have previously refused to work with AfD. Germany's domestic intelligence agency has classified it as a "right-wing extremist" group in Saxony-Anhalt.

The final results of the election showed AfD falling three seats short, with only 39 lawmakers out of the 83-seat parliament. The party won 43.8% of the vote, more than double its showing from five years ago in a region comprised of 2.1 million people to the west of Berlin.

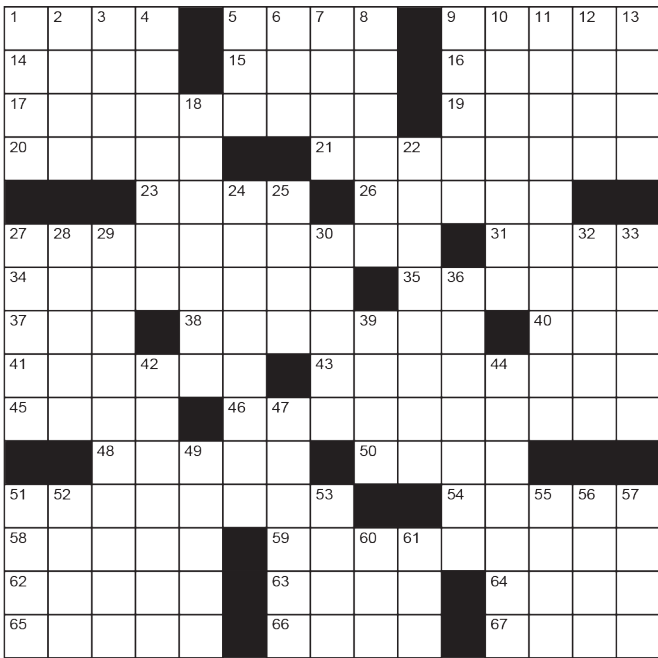
Saxony-Anhalt also experienced a record-high voter participation of 76.5%.

TRUMP'S NEW MEXICO COMMENTS SPARK DEMOCRATIC BACKLASH

New Mexico Democrats are pushing back against President Donald Trump's recent social media posts about renaming New Mexico to "New America."

"New Mexico's name isn't up for debate — it's been ours since before the United States existed," said Democratic New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham in an X post. "While the President tries to distract Americans from his disastrous war in Iran, the price of gas — and everything else — keeps rising."

The outrage comes after Trump posted a series of images and messages to Truth Social, according to NBC. "Many people suggested changing the name of New Mexico, one of the great vote cheating states of all time, to NEW AMERICA," he wrote in a post. "So much more prestigious and beautiful for the people of that potentially incredible State. Wow, I Love It!!!"



- ACROSS**
- 1 Walden, for one
5 Walk the floor
9 Kind of coffee
14 Winglike
15 Cassini of
couture
16 Meta's home:
____ Park, CA
17 Turning off, as
app notifications
19 Give a ____ the
back (2 wds.)
20 Major mess
21 They play on the
range
23 Math course,
for short
26 Projecting
window
27 Burst of energy
31 Blood fluids
34 Texas
Panhandle city
35 Houston nine
37 ____ King Cole
38 Above all the
rest?
40 Don't just sit
there
41 Hollywood's
Charlize
43 Fishburne of
"The Matrix"
45 1986 #1 hit for
Starship
46 Indexing term
48 Pep up
50 Coop residents
51 Safeguard
54 Clothing store
section
58 Prince hit, "I
Wanna Be Your
____"
- 59 Wake too late
62 Rehab
candidates
63 Jellystone bear
64 Aware
65 Latin dance
66 Messy dresser
67 Cozy spot
- DOWN**
- 1 Goalie's gear
2 Lena of "Nine
Perfect
Strangers"
3 "Apollo 13" org.
4 Schematic maker
5 DC denizen
6 Ryan's "Love
Story" co-star
7 Wrestler-actor
John
8 Holiday drink
9 Louvre Pyramid
architect
10 Most authentic
11 Narrow-minded
12 Unappetizing
food
13 Sharpen skills
- 18 Chipotle offering
22 Pirate's loot
24 Hawaii native
25 Seaside soarer
27 Part of a suit
28 Mutual of ____
29 It rises after a
good rain
30 Breadbasket
items
32 Madonna's son
33 Daisylike flower
36 Orchestra group
39 To ____ his own
42 Poker players,
at times
44 Greek vowel
47 Diplomats, e.g.
49 Vice ____
51 Not only that
52 Actress Salazar
53 Darwin subj.
55 Artist Magritte
56 Reply to "Shall
we?"
57 Kind of check
60 It may need a
boost
61 Barbecue bit

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

Horoscope

The sad tunes-o-scope

AIDAN GRAHAM | ARTS & CULTURE EDITOR
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With September's arrival alongside a week of stormy weather, it's easy to get trapped in the doom and gloom of the day-to-day. While you may look toward greener pastures, sometimes it's healthy to revel in our feelings, and there's no better way to do so than through music. Everyone celebrates their melancholy a little differently, so here's what we recommend based on your sign.

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 22): You never got the last word, did you, Virgo. Your pain relates to the thousand things you didn't get to say and the things you left behind. It'll take some time, but every second it gets a little further away in the mirror. Here are some tunes we recommend while it does. Your genre is slowcore.
[Recommendations: Mac DeMarco, Alex G, Duster]

LIBRA (SEP. 23-OCT. 22): Libra, ever the romantic, ever the scorned. In times of sadness, it can be easy for you to tear open old wounds. You yearn for connection, yet haven't had time to process your grief in a world that feels like it's often leaving you behind. At least this genre can let you know you're not alone. Your genre is modern indie.
[Recs: Phoebe Bridgers, Laufey, Lucy Dacus]

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21): Everyone processes their feelings differently, Scorpio, but you won't be found sobbing in your pillow — rather, howling from the rooftops. If you're going to kick, bite and scream it out, you might as well have an excellent soundtrack. Your genre is doom metal!
[Recs: My Dying Bride, Swallow the Sun]

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21): Sagittarius, your sadness is raw, exposed and deeply human. You often find yourself on the outskirts of being a person, unsure how to relate and not sure where to go next. Sometimes you need to look to the past to start moving forward. Your genre is classic indie.
[Recs: Elliot Smith, Mazzy Star, Jeff Buckley]

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19): Capricorn, your hurt is reminiscent of an autumn chill and the sound of the answering machine. You're holding onto something, not out of nostalgia, but some self-retribution. You have so much more life to live, Capricorn. This too will pass, but to make it a little easier, we recommend alternative rock.
[Recs: Death Cab for Cutie, Interpol, Radiohead]

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18): Aquarius, some days, you wish to disappear among the greenery, to meld with the landscape. You're often too self-aware, afraid

of your mortality, and don't know if you'll ever know your place in this wide world. You don't need all the answers. This life is what you make of it. In the meantime, here's some sound to play while your tea steeps. Your genre is folk.
[Recs: Adrianna Lenker, Sufjan Stevens, Nick Drake]

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20): Pisces, your sadness echoes a deep yearning for the past. It can feel unfair to have to let go, especially when the time you hold feels so short. However, the longer you hold on, the less room you have for the things on the road ahead. The sound you need emanates from parking lot sunsets, small town romances and a longing for what once was. Your genre is Midwest emo.
[Recs: American Football, Modern Baseball, Empty Parking Lot]

ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19): Aries, your sadness mimics the weight that comes from balancing your loving nature and need for control. When you can't make sense of how the pieces fell in front of you, it's easy to feel lost and anxious. The world can be a chaotic place but sometimes you have to hit those feelings with an, "it is what it is," and focus on what's in front of you. You can channel that with your genre, alternative R&B.
[Recs: Frank Ocean, Steve Lacy, SZA]

TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20): Taurus, your sadness reeks of chain smoking, wet pavement and new tattoos. It might be time to reinvent yourself, but before you can, you must reflect on everything that got you where you are now. It's going to be tough, but some sound to channel it to might make it a little easier. Your genre is post-hardcore.
[Recs: Title-Fight, Superheaven, Basement]

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20): Gemini, your mind can become a heavy place of spiraling thoughts and day-to-day anxieties. Processing your pain requires you to leave your body in an emotional and cathartic trance, one you'll only find with your genre, Shoegaze.
[Recs: My Bloody Valentine, Slowdive, LSD and the Search for God]

CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22): Cancer, your methods for emotional processing are rather unorthodox. We certainly won't find you talking about your feelings, but will hear you in the shower, beer in hand, bellowing the lyrics to "One Last Breath." Just make sure this is an at-home activity only. Your genre is divorced dad rock!
[Recs: Creed, Staind, Three Days Grace]

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22): Leo, you often feel you were meant for another time. You carry with you deep longing for a world you're not sure will ever exist again. While you can't be sure what the future holds, you may find comfort in the sounds of years past. Your genre is the classics.
[Recs: Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, Gordon Lightfoot]



ALYSSA JO MURNION | CARTOONIST

Students have mixed opinions on Seth Bodnar's Senate campaign

JOCelyn HOOD | NEWS REPORTER
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Students at the University of Montana across the political spectrum have mixed opinions on former University President Seth Bodnar's Independent Senate run.

Bodnar was UM's president for eight years before he resigned in January and announced his Senate campaign in March.

He is running against Republican Kurt Alme, Democrat Alani Bankhead and Libertarian Kyle Austin.

Bodnar's platform focuses on affordability, rural health care and education, reproductive rights, defending public lands and the Second Amendment and supporting veterans, tribal members and retirees.

Leaders of UM's Young Democratic Socialists of America and Turning Point USA chapters both expressed concerns over Bodnar's campaign.

"He's just a moderate guy," said Jack Anderson, the president of UM's chapter of Young Democratic Socialists of America. "I'm worried that it's going to give a bad name to the idea of independence."

Anderson said he was concerned that Bodnar's campaign will continue to make people think Independent candidates are an unviable option that will never win an election due to the spoiler effect.

The spoiler effect is the idea that a losing candidate affects the results of an election by splitting votes with a similar candidate and bringing their polls down.

Some voters believe that Bodnar and Bankhead will split the Democratic vote because neither of them withdrew from the ballot by the Aug. 10 deadline.

"If one of them would have dropped out, it would have been a tighter race, but because Alani did not drop out, I would argue that his chances have pretty much dropped very significantly," said Trey Kinamon, the president of UM's Turning Point USA chapter.

Kinamon, who is also the co-chair of the Montana State Republicans, said that Bodnar is too Democratic to be Independent.

"What I've seen from Seth Bodnar's campaign has just been constant kissing up to the Democrat Party, like taking money from ActBlue, a Democrat donation company," said Kinamon, a 21-year-old political science and communications studies major from



Former University of Montana President Seth Bodnar gives the State of the University Address on Sept. 28, 2023. CHRIS LODMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN ARCHIVE

Conrad, Montana. "I get tired of him preaching independence when I just don't think he would do that in DC at all."

Kinzie Turner, a 19-year-old sophomore from Billings, said she likes that he is running as an Independent.

"I am leaning toward Bodnar personally because I don't really know if I can fully associate myself with one of the sides," said Turner, an integrated physiology and athletic training major. "I do like, especially as a Montana resident, that he has a military background because I know that's a very opinionated thing here in Montana."

Some specific policies of Bodnar's that Anderson said the Young Democratic Socialists of America supported were rank-choice voting, Medicaid expansion, school reforms, supporting rural hospitals and supporting farmers and ranchers.

"A lot of his policies that I think we do support aren't always going far enough," said Anderson, a 22-year-old political science and history major from Great Falls. "Like with ranked choice, just as a principle, that's not enough to effectively have a proper democratic voice. You have to pair it with multi-member districts and single ballot initiatives."

Kinamon said that his issues with

Bodnar lie mostly with his position as an Independent rather than his policies.

He said that Bodnar has been a "snake" because he is running as an Independent, but has ties to the Democratic Party.

Kinamon said Bodnar's connection with Jon Tester, a former Democratic senator from Montana, and the time he was a special guest of Michelle Obama at a 2012 presidential debate are examples of him being more Democratic than Independent.

Ada Milner, the harassment grievance officer for UM's chapter of Young Democratic Socialists of America, said that his time as UM's president doesn't lead her to believe that he would be a good senator.

"We need to look at his history of leadership at UM," said Milner, a 19-year-old social work major from Kalispell. "There are some pretty glaring things that aren't really talked about and should be, like a Title IX case that was settled by the University when he was president."

That Title IX case was a lawsuit against the University involving 18 plaintiffs that began in 2021. It alleged that female employees at the University were not paid the same as male counterparts, they couldn't advance their careers, and younger, more attractive women were

prioritized for positions.

The lawsuit named President Bodnar as someone who perpetuated this culture of sex-based discrimination. In early 2024, the lawsuit was settled for \$350,000.

Milner also said Bodnar made too much money in his role as the University president, earning over \$360,000 in 2025.

"As we have budget cuts to major departments, to languages, to English, it's a really frightening thing," Milner said. "And there's not a direct tie, but tangentially, he's using our money to do whatever he does. We've funded [his campaign] in a way, whether or not we wanted to."

Kinamon thought that, as the UM president, Bodnar's work in earning R1 status for the University and his efforts to support veteran students were good, but his funding choices harmed students.

"It felt as if students were kind of put on the back burner, so that way they could push our sports more," Kinamon said. "I mean, our funding right now is just obliterated. They're probably going to raise tuition on us every other year."

Stacia Smith, an environmental studies major from Canada, said she liked Bodnar as University president.

"I felt like he was very involved with the students, and I felt like he was very genuine and cared a lot about the students," Smith said.

Smith also said that him running as an Independent leaves "so much more room for integrating different policies and different ideas."

Moya Jefrees, a junior majoring in cybersecurity and Spanish from Boise, Idaho, said that her major concern with Bodnar was the petitioning that he did.

Jefrees was a petitioner for two different initiated constitutional amendments last spring and was not involved with Bodnar's campaign, but she said she had a hard time getting signatures because of Bodnar's petitioning strategies.

"His petitioners were paid by signature, so they were very pushy, and gave a bad reputation for petitioners," Jefrees said. "We got turned away by the public, and a lot of them were kind of over being harassed, and most of them decided that it was Seth Bodnar's petitioners that were super harsh and pushing signatures."

The general election will take place on Nov. 3.

AI cameras on campus cause concerns over privacy

COLBY SUKO-CLARK | NEWS REPORTER

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Over 300 cameras with artificial intelligence surveillance capabilities have been implemented across the University of Montana campus and are sparking outrage among some students.

The cameras are able to track the clothing of people as well as spot medical emergencies, and are constantly filming.

"I don't like them, the cameras serve no purpose to me," said Ethan Andersch, a political science major at UM. The contract for the cameras had been active for several years before their implementation. Currently, there are cameras in communal parts of the residence halls, the Oval and across the Missoula campus.

The cameras are owned by the company Verkada, which specializes in security technology. It has operations for large clients like the Miami Dolphins' Hard Rock Stadium, but also offer small home security options. The University has worked with other security technology companies in the past.

"Get rid of them already," Andersch said. He also spoke about the concerns of AI cameras being used in general.

Flock is the most well known of these services and has sparked outrage over privacy, with content creators destroying the cameras or placing covers on them. However, Verkada is new to the AI market, only adopting the AI usage in May of this year. Brandon Davito, senior vice president of product and operations at Verkada, talked about the change in a press release in May.

"Every update we make to Verkada's platform is focused on giving security teams the right tools for the right situations," Davito said in the release. These tools included updates to software, but more importantly, the power of AI.

"Whether it's identifying operational issues with AI-powered alerts or customizing emergency response protocols, we're building a platform that brings all of the functionality required for complex enterprise security operations with the simplicity and ease of a modern, cloud-based platform," he said in the release. These emergency protocols are among the uses of the new cameras.

"Overall, it just makes our response



A Verkada camera swivels as cars pass outside of the University of Montana's PARTV building on Sept. 5. **MARS JOHNSON | MONTANA KAIMIN**

capabilities more efficient and I think it increases the level of safety that we provide to the people who come here to enjoy an event," Brad Giffin, the University of Montana police chief, told the Missoulian. He also clarified that there is no active facial recognition software, so the cameras won't be able to track people by face.

However, Verkada has had a previous issue with the security of its systems. In 2021, a group of hackers hacked into over 150,000 cameras in a case that was settled in 2024. This hack included cameras in schools, hospitals and companies. Yet Giffin assured that a hack would not be as damaging if it were to successfully happen.

"A breach of a security system like

this one would only allow people to see something [on the cameras], it would not provide any personally protected information about that specific person," he told the Missoulian. However, this has not calmed the worries of some students and groups across campus.

"This is a big privacy issue," said Jack Anderson, leader of the Young Democratic Socialists of America at the University of Montana. He expressed that the Young Democratic Socialists at the University want the cameras gone.

"I hope we can work directly with the University," he said. However, he noted that they would be willing to take a stand if the University does not relent on its use of the cameras.

"This is a fear of government

surveillance, and it's very Orwellian in the way it is being used," Anderson said. He cited the quiet installation of the equipment as a concern.

"The fact that I didn't know is extremely scary," said Thea D'Hooze, a 19-year-old second year studying philosophy. There was no formal announcement of the cameras, and for some students on campus, it felt like an invasion of privacy.

"This is where I live," D'Hooze said. "It's like cameras going up in my backyard, and I don't like that." D'Hooze lives on campus in Pantzer Hall and is one of several students that feel like their privacy has been stripped.

"It makes me incredibly uncomfortable if I know I am being surveilled, and I don't like it at all," D'Hooze said.

AN ITCH ————— FOR RELIEF

DESPITE A NATIONWIDE DECREASE IN TOBACCO USE, THE DRUG SHOWS SIGNS OF AN INCREASE AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

Story by Niamh O'Farrell • Photos by Embrv Ericson

The cool night air in Missoula grows crisper as people gather downtown outside their favorite establishments. On the back porch of Stockman's Bar, 21-year-old Oliver Frame and his friends laugh as they pass a cigarette around the circle.

"It's like the acoustic version of vaping," Frame said. He was first introduced to vaping by his friends on the school bus. "Now I'm just addicted to nicotine."

For about two decades, the anti-tobacco message has been clear. Campaigns such as the Truth Initiative, started in 1998, say smoking and using other tobacco products have a negative impact on the health of the user. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cigarette smoking or secondhand smoke exposure cause nearly nine out of 10 lung cancer deaths.

Smoking in particular has been singled out, and since the late 1990s, banned in some public places, including in bars, restaurants and on the University of Montana campus. However, despite that information, smoking appears to be increasing among college students, according to national data.

While tobacco use has been decreasing among people who are 18 to 25 years old since 2015, a report from the National Survey on Drug Use suggests a spike in tobacco use specifically among college students after decades of decline.

According to the National College Health Assessment, tobacco use among



Ellec Brumwell, 22, left, and Aydin Bayford, 20, pose and smoke while hiking the M Trail with their 6-month-old dog Babygirl on Sept. 7. **JACKSON MAILEY | MONTANA KAIMIN**

undergraduate college students increased from 17% to 23% from 2021 to 2022, and remained at that rate the following year. The organization changed methods, but reported a small increase from 21% in 2024 to 22% in 2025.

While national data points to a small but noticeable upward spike in tobacco

use, pockets of popular culture have seen a more substantial change.

A report from public health organization The Truth Initiative shows a 10% increase in tobacco imagery in 2024 films compared to 2023. The study found a 43% increase in any reference involving tobacco during the same years.

"I feel like there's been this weird rebrand where vapes are stupid, and cigarettes are in," Rae Lynn Wehr, a 21-year-old UM psychology major, said.

Other people have seen a rise, but not to the same extent. "Yes and no," Seryn Epley, a 22-year-old Tandem Bakery and Cafe barista, said. "Yes, because a lot of people I know smoke cigarettes when they're drunk, but half the people I know don't mess with nicotine at all."

Each smoker has their own reason for using nicotine products. Some people are cigarette smokers and no outlying factors will change that, whereas others shift to alternate forms of nicotine to satisfy their craving.

PICK YOUR POISON

There are several ways people choose to use nicotine. They can pop in a Zyn for a discreet, odor-free option, use a vape or smoke a cigarette.

Vapes gained quick popularity over the years, with regular adult users rising 62% from 2014 to 2022, according to the American Lung Association, but recent increases to the cost may be leading users back to the age-old cigarette.

"It's called the substitution effect," said Taylor Matthew, an economics professor at the University of Montana. "When you have two goods or services that are substitutable, if the price of one goes up, what we can expect to happen is people who were vaping before will switch to cigarettes due to price."

This is something Conn Merrick, a local musician, has experienced.

"When I started smoking, cigarettes were like \$3.50 to \$5 a pack and Juuls were more expensive," Merrick said. As his addiction grew, Merrick began paying up to \$12 per pack, four times a week. "It's almost \$200 a month just on cigarettes."

Nicotine use can be heavily tied to the environments of certain social settings. Prospective users are more likely to indulge when others in their circle are frequent users. Cigarette user Rachael Bruns, as well as Epley and Frame, observed that the social environment influenced the way they smoked.

"It's a social thing for me, it's the same as drinking," Bruns said. "It helps you meet people, and I love meeting people."

At the Zootown Arts Community Center, there are a few things one might see: music fans getting wristbands, people buying merch and possibly someone twirling a pack of Zyns.

Merrick, a 30-year-old bassist from Nashville, Tennessee, stood in a group of people who were doing just that, laughing and chatting before he took to the stage to play bass with his band, Cul.de.sac.

"I started smoking cigarettes when I was about 14 or 15, and when I was in high school, Juuls came out, but it's always mostly been cigarettes for me," Merrick



Cul.de.sac bass player Conn Merrick, 30, poses for a portrait in the University Center on Sept. 2.

said. At least, it used to be. He pulled out a blue puck of Zyns and placed a small packet into the pocket of his gum and lip. Lately, he's been using Zyns in hopes of quitting nicotine altogether, but he doesn't like them.

"They give me acid reflux. They are not enjoyable at all, but they've been very helpful for me," Merrick said.

Nicotine doesn't just serve as an addictive vice for people — for some, it can serve as part of their social outlet.

SIDEWALK COMMUNITY

On the packed back porch of Stockman's Bar, in a tight black T-shirt and denim cut-offs, Bruns stood with her phone and drink balanced in one hand and a black refillable vape in the other. For her, it's all about the look.

"It's hot," the 20-year-old communications major said while hitting her vape. "I gave up vaping for Lent one year so I switched to cigarettes," Bruns said, laughing at the irony of swapping one unhealthy habit for another.

There is a huge variety of flavors and styles for how someone can consume nicotine, and Bruns, like many others, has her preferences. "I don't like the fruity tastes of most vapes, but I like mint vapes and menthol cigarettes."

On the hunt for a cigarette of her preference, Bruns made her way through the porch of college students on a Saturday night toward a smiley and chatty pool of flat-brimmed hats, various colors of Chacos and orange Patagonia coats. There, she found a cigarette to share.

The porch of Stockman's Bar serves as a hub for those who need to smoke. As fast as Bruns and Frame arrived and smoked, they left and a new group of college students filled the porch, reached into their pockets and pulled out their choice of vapes and cigarettes.

In 2005, Montana passed the Clean Indoor Air Act, which banned smoking in indoor areas. In the fall of 2011 the University of Montana became a tobacco-free campus, banning the use of tobacco products on University grounds. Seven years later, E-cigarettes and vapes were formally added to the ban.

THE COST OF RELIEF

The health impacts are very real.

"It starts with the lungs," Ken Johnson, a respiratory therapist, said. "Oxygen is transported through your lungs to your blood, then into your heart. So when you inhale that, it increases the work on the heart."

Some smokers are aware of the dangers associated with smoking, but still choose to engage with it anyway.

"It's a weird thing," 21-year-old Neila Lyngholm said. "I think of myself as a rational person who would respond to those [anti-smoking campaigns]. I do a lot of stuff that's bad for me. I'm not thinking about the future consequences, I guess." Despite her father being a cancer nurse, Lyngholm said she still isn't concerned about the future damage that smoking could have on her lungs.

The full impact of long-term vaping is still unknown, but the Centers for Disease Control reports several potential harms tied to consistent vaping, including ingesting heavy metals like tin and nickel. Some flavoring compounds have been linked to serious lung cancer.

"I can vape all day every day, and my chest would hurt a lot worse. I had a heart issue, and vaping is one of the ways I discovered I had that issue," Merrick said. After learning about this heart condition, Merrick had to have surgery on his heart to fix the problem. He also described how different the feeling of vaping was from cigarettes. The lack of a filter on a vape made the impact on his lungs feel much harsher.

Vaping doesn't draw the same attention that cigarettes do. Vapes do not set off smoke detectors, the smell does not linger on clothing and furniture, and, if inhaled in a certain way, won't let out any vapor. This can make vape usage easier and more convenient.

"I found myself vaping in bed, which I would never do with a cigarette," Merrick said. "Cigarettes are more ritualistic, you have to go outside and make time for it. I had a phase where I liked rolling with more expensive tobacco. It was ritualistic, at least rolling them was."

Nicotine can provide people with a sense of comfort and routine, but it leads people to regularly engage with a deeply unhealthy habit.

"When there are studies done about nicotine use, something that is always lost is the dose," John Quindry, a professor of integrative physiology and athletic training with the University of Montana, said. "The people who were cigarette smokers needed less nicotine to feel satisfied than vapers and pouch users." National Institutes of

Health data also backs Quindry's insight.

Despite the general public's recognition of the negative impacts of nicotine use, more options for nicotine ingestion have become available.

According to Grand View Research, pouch sales are projected to increase to more than \$40 billion worldwide by 2033 from \$6.9 billion in 2025. Similar to a nicotine patch or gum, a Zyn is a smokeless way to ingest nicotine. Heavy use of Zyns can lead to gum inflammation and gum recession.

"It's a shock to your immune system because you're putting something [there] that shouldn't be there. You're irritating your blood vessels and your immune system," Quindry said.

Aside from the health risks of using the several different methods of tobacco, there is also the cost factor.

"No matter what you choose," Merrick said, "it's gonna end up costing you money and be bad for your health."

As of 2021, the average cost of a pack of cigarettes in Missoula was around \$6.50, according to Tobacco Insider, an industry analysis company. In the last five years cigarettes have increased about 33% in price on average, whereas the average price of vapes has doubled.

Recent social trends on the internet are reviving accessories that go along with smoking, such as cigarette wallets and novelty lighters.

Rockin Rudy's has sold over \$15,500 in lighters, ashtrays and other smoking-related paraphernalia in the past year, a 20% growth compared to the last four years.

As prices rise, time will tell if the popularity of tobacco is a temporary spike driven by groups of college users, or a long-term comeback across demographics.



An ashtray full of smoked cigarettes sits on a table behind student housing on Sussex Avenue on Sept. 1.

Big Sky makes big initiative moves

SABRINA PHILIP | ARTS REPORTER
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Montana is gearing up for November with a new initiative to redefine election funding. Initiative 194 aims to maneuver around Citizens United in an attempt to reduce the influence of corporations in the political sphere.

The website supporting the plan explains the premise behind Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, which protects First Amendment rights of corporations by allowing independent political expenditures. While funding cannot be given directly to candidates, the ruling protects independent political speech, such as political advertisements.

The initiative's uniqueness lies in its legal approach. Rather than challenging the Supreme Court's decision in Citizens United, supporters say it navigates around the verdict. Supporters include Montana politicians on both sides of the aisle, such as U.S. House of Representatives candidate Sam Forstag, Former Gov. Steve Bullock, Former Gov. Marc Racicot and Former Sen. Jon Tester. Organizations supporting the plan include End Citizens United, League of Women Voters Montana and Veterans for All Voters Montana.

"The Montana Plan unties our hands by letting Montanans decide what corporations have the power to do in our state," Bullock said on the plan's website. "This honors our history of fair play and returns the power back to the voters, where it belongs."

On June 16, the campaign announced it had submitted roughly 50,000 signatures to officials for verification.

According to the plan's website, I-194 utilizes "the State's authority to define what powers corporations get and stop giving them the power to spend in our politics." It was submitted officially by Jeff Mangan, a former Montana Commissioner of Political Practices.

Supporters in Montana seek to bypass the verdict by withholding a

company's power to spend on elections unless given permission. If the state does not grant corporations the legal authority to practice political spending, advocates argue they cannot exercise the constitutional right recognized in Citizens United. This, supporters claim, will make the verdict irrelevant.

"The Montana Plan gives elections back to the individual," a guest columnist in the Flathead Beacon recently wrote. "Corporations would no longer be able to pour millions of dollars of Dark Money into a specific candidate's campaign in Montana or place ads that deceive the voters about another. Every campaign donation would have to be disclosed, and the public would know where that contribution originated from."

Advocates for I-194 hope to limit corporate involvement by prohibiting "artificial persons" from spending money on campaigns, ballot measures and political parties. Artificial persons are defined in the plan as nonprofits, trusts, partnerships, corporations, trade groups or unincorporated associations, including those doing business in Montana.

Montana, like every state, has the broad authority to form and regulate corporations under the law, as well as determine what powers they are granted. The plan would redefine these groups' authority to spend money in the political process unless given the freedom to do so. Organizations that violate restrictions could be prohibited from doing business in Montana until they comply.

Opposition to I-194 include Montanans for Free Speech, the Montana Chamber of Commerce and, most notably, the Montana Republican Party Executive Board. The main dissent argues the petition would violate free speech rights, would hurt small businesses and could fall apart due to legal challenges if passed.

"I-194 would clearly and egregiously strip Montana's small, family-owned

businesses, organizations and associations of their constitutional First Amendment speech rights, all while privileging out-of-state billionaires with unrestricted spending in Montana's elections," the MTGOP said in a press release.

Opponents, including the Montana Chamber of Commerce, Montana Mining Association and others, filed a lawsuit in March to block the initiative from appearing on the ballot. The challenge to the initiative was dismissed at the end of the month.

"As written, it would apply to all LLCs and similar entities, including family-owned businesses, farms, churches and nonprofits, banning them from speaking out about candidates and ballot issues.

"The Chamber is also concerned about the vague language around 'anything of value,' which could unintentionally limit everyday activities," the website said.

Questions of donor transparency and dark money funding have also been raised. Prior to April, the Transparent Election Initiative donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to the petition. The Montana Free Press revealed that its donors remain undisclosed.

Residents in Montana will vote on Initiative 194 in November, forcing voters to consider the limits on political spending in the state. While Montana is not the first state to attempt to limit corporate money in the political sphere, the state's legal approach to working around the artificial persons framework offers a glimpse into future election-funding policy.



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CONQUERING 100 MILES

TOP: Trent Vanschoyck recreates a portion of his century ride in East Missoula on Sept. 4.

MIDDLE: Trent Vanschoyck poses and looks out to Marshall Mountain near the route of his Sept. 1 ride.

BOTTOM: Rider Trent Vanschoyck poses on the Bitterroot Trail on Sept. 4.



BRAYDEN VALLOW | PHOTOGRAPHER
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A University of Montana student conquered a 100-mile bike ride, better known as a "century ride," on Sept. 1, starting from Craig Hall and completing a loop around Stevensville.

The challenge turned out to be far from just going with the flow. Trent Vanschoyck, a 19-year-old sophomore, decided he wanted to take on the endeavor only two days before his initial ride. Vanschoyck didn't know anything about the challenge, but believed he could tackle it.

"If it's fun, do it," Vanschoyck said.

Century rides gained popularity in the 1980s with cyclist Dora Rinehart's rides around Colorado. The ride itself requires the rider to travel 100 miles over any elevation in one day. Century rides are known for their intensity and are seen as a milestone for amateur riders. Group rides encourage others to achieve this milestone.

Vanschoyck rode alone for the challenge, but prepared with sophomore Logan Pellicer. Pellicer, like Vanschoyck, is a long time rider, but on a mountain bike rather than a road bike.

"We did some other rides together, and I wasn't concerned hearing about the ride itself," Pellicer said. "Although the route he took had hard roads."

Vanschoyck's attire was not standard for a distance cyclist. He was dressed in cargo pants and carried a pack designed for runners that contained SunnyD, Gushers and water. He listened to Michael Jackson's "Girlfriend."

The route was a straight line down to Stevensville using the Bitterroot Trail. When Vanschoyck reached the turnaround off Main Street, it started to rain. Vanschoyck had only worn a T-shirt.

"My biggest fear was hitting a stamina wall and falling asleep, not the rain," Vanschoyck said.

At this point, 50 miles remained, but the math was not adding up. With 30 of those miles left until Craig Hall, Vanschoyck realized he needed an additional 20 miles on his route, which led to a large lap into East Missoula.

The ride became a battle of staying at pace while making it back without any new scars.

"I just continued to tell myself, gotta get it done," Vanschoyck said.

The ride concluded at 8:02 p.m. with an average speed of 16.6 miles per hour over a distance of 100.2 miles.

"I did prepare myself, but I think anyone's willpower can get them through it," Vanschoyck said.

Local business brings Hawaii to the Big Sky

SABRINA PHILIP | ARTS REPORTER
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On Missoula's South Avenue, against the Montana skyline and fields of grass, strings of Hawaiian lei and a pastel pink fence signal a new Missoula business.

Complemented by Hawaiian music and authentic Hawaiian shaved ice, Stella's Surf Shack has found a new home on Missoula's West Side.

Stella Harberd, the owner of Stella's Surf Shack, is a 19-year-old student at the University of Montana, attending school online while running her business. The idea for the surf shack struck when she was 15.

From ages 15 to 18, Harberd worked on perfecting her ideas. Now, as a sophomore majoring in business management, she owns both the mini truck and the permanent trailer location on South Avenue.

The original idea, Harberd explained, was a golf cart that sold packaged ice cream. Yet, due to health and legal restrictions, the idea shifted to a Japanese mini truck that preceded her brick and mortar.

"My parents went all in and I literally couldn't have done a single thing without them," Harberd said. "They purchased me a little Mazda B2000 1982, and my dad missed an entire ski season. For two years we went all in on making this little food truck. We later found out there were some issues with it, and so we ended up kind of converting ideas and doing a Japanese mini truck."

Harberd explained that as her idea developed, she shifted from packaged ice cream to "something that Missoula doesn't have yet": authentic Hawaiian shaved ice. Having grown up in Hawaii, Harberd was dedicated to making her products authentic. She shared that she not only consulted "people in Hawaii," but also that her products and shaved ice machine are from Honolulu.

"I just really felt like I wanted to introduce this to Missoula, and not only introduce it, but do it correctly," Harberd said. "An idea that started as a small one when I was entering my sophomore year of high school has now quickly changed my whole life into what it is today."

The mini truck, which opened in June 2025, is available to book for parties and travels to farmers' markets. Her permanent location, converted out of an old trailer, opened a year later in June 2026.

Harberd's work at the new location averages 15 hours a day, decreasing to 12 hours on a "good day." After being at the shop from open to close, the work doesn't

stop when she gets home.

"Honestly, by the time I get home at around 9 p.m, I do school from 9-11, and wake up again at 5 the next day," Harberd said. "Trying to figure out how to be human, I think, is the hardest part, but I have the most incredible support system, and the girls in there are my best friends. They take care of me more than I take care of them."

The spot is best known for authentic shaved ice, but the menu also includes dirty sodas, lotus drinks, coffee, hot dogs, churros, donut holes and more. It features both a walk-up window and a drive through. Harberd said the spot's design was inspired by her special connection to Hawaii.

"I always joke that I can't bring this to the ocean right now," Harberd said. "All I can offer is a cow pasture across the road, but I can do everything else! We always have leis set out, we always have Hawaiian music playing ... We obviously love the color pink, so we have a bunch of pink tables out here for everyone."

While Harberd's Hawaiian theme makes her stand out in the Missoula scene, her employee makeup is equally unique. Her team is made up of 10 women ranging in age from 18 to 28, all of whom, according to Harberd, are in "similar stages of life."

"I really feel so lucky that literally every single menu item on there, the measurements, the prices, the recipes, all of that is thanks to them," Harberd said. "It's just been so cool to not only build a business, but also build a friendship that I truly believe I'll have for the rest of my life. These girls are incredible."

This work environment, Harberd shared, has fostered a special connection between the Missoula community and her team.

"We're pretty badass, I must say," Harberd said. "When a mom comes through and says that her daughter looks up to me, it literally almost puts me in tears every time. That is the best compliment I could receive. I just think that my team resembles that, and the way that we empower each other and always have each other's backs. People always say that we have a delicious product, but more than anything, they say that we're kind."

Harberd said her goal for the future of her business is to expand to a bigger space and create a location that focuses solely on her shaved ice. "Dreams change every single day, because a year ago, this was my dream," she said. She emphasized the importance of taking it day by day.

"If I've learned anything in business, it's that if you don't show up for yourself, no one's gonna show up for your business," Harberd said. "I think even [when] faking



ABOVE: Stella Harberd poses outside her shack on Sept. 3. **BRAYDEN VALLOW | MONTANA KAIMIN**

BELOW: A customer uses the drive through lane at Stella's Surf Shack on Sept. 3. **BRAYDEN VALLOW | MONTANA KAIMIN**



it on the days where I feel like I don't know what I'm doing, being surrounded by these people that believe in me is incredible. I would just say keep on going at your dreams because your life can literally change

overnight, and you have no idea what it's gonna look like a year from now. I certainly thought I'd be on the beach right now. Now I'm sitting back at a cow pasture, so you never know."

The Roxy Theater undergoes renovations

NIAMH O'FARRELL | ARTS REPORTER

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The Roxy movie theater has undergone renovations that will hopefully make your next viewing experience clearer than it's ever been.

On Sept. 4, the Roxy wrapped up renovations on its roof and three main projector rooms. The renovations involved replacing the projector screens and installing six new speakers, including behind the screen. Additional repairs to the roof were deemed necessary after staff discovered water leaking from the ceiling into one of the screening rooms.

"You look up at the ceiling one day, and there's a little water coming through," said Matt Riley, the 38-year-old technical director. Besides roofing repairs, Riley and the rest of the Roxy staff have been carrying out the renovations themselves.

A staple of Missoula's downtown Hip Strip, the Roxy was built in 1937 to serve as a way for the people of Missoula to have affordable access to movies and news.

While the first in some time, the Roxy is no stranger to major renovations. In December 1994, the theater's original owner, Eddie Sharp, passed away, allegedly promising the theater to be inherited by multiple people. In February 1995, disputes began over who was supposed to inherit the theater. During said dispute, an unidentified individual set the theater on fire in an attempt to destroy it completely. The identity of this person is still unknown to this day.

In March, while replacing one of the projector screens, staff realized just how badly the speakers needed replacements.

"We'll have a lot more freedom to play things at dynamic volumes, and they're just much, much clearer overall," Riley said.

Additionally, the new screens will have small perforations, allowing sound to pass through more easily. The screens are also set to improve the brightness of the film being shown by 8 to 10%. This is the first time the screens have been replaced since the fire in 1996.

The Roxy has always been a gathering space for community across Missoula. It shows old and new films using original film in the vintage way that reflects its interior.



Two individuals get ready to see a movie on newly-installed screens, speakers and projectors in the Roxy Theater on Sept. 1. **BRAYDEN VALLOW | MONTANA KAIMIN**

"You can definitely notice a difference in the screens that have already been changed," said Abby Richerson, a senior manager of an educational nonprofit.

Along with better screen quality, fans can expect to experience a much-improved sound quality as well. Some old speakers had damaged cones that could result in a murky sound, according to Riley.

However, some of the audio problems that the Roxy has faced were beyond their control.

"Understanding dialogue is a common problem we hear back that people struggle with," said Tammy Bodlovic, the development director at the Roxy. "Some of that can be [that] independent movies sometimes don't have the best budget or the best soundtrack, but we are working to provide the best sound that we can on our end to alleviate that problem."

Dynamic sound mixing can make a listening experience challenging for an audience. Some movies, such as Christopher Nolan's "The Odyssey," feature crashing waves and lots of sounds related to action, but are often paired with very low and quiet dialogue that can make the viewer experience less enjoyable.

Despite the modernizing renovations, the Roxy will continue to show movies in its theaters using the traditional film it's always used. "We recycle everything. We try to make our events fun," Bodlovic said.

Enthusiastic moviegoers can now experience their favorite movies in the same beloved environment, with higher-quality sound and visuals to go along with them.



Loose wire seen on the left wall of theater three in The Roxy on Sept. 1.

BRAYDEN VALLOW | MONTANA KAIMIN

The art of a tailgate

DILLON RICHARDSON | SPORTS REPORTER

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The football season is well underway at the University of Montana, and while fans flock to Missoula to watch the Griz play, the game isn't the only thing going on.

Hours before every home game, thousands of fans gather for one of the most honored traditions in sports: tailgating.

Dozens of pickups, RVs and other vehicles make their way onto the streets and parking lots surrounding Washington-Grizzly Stadium, and a few hours before kickoff, the party begins. Some tailgates are for causes, like the Griz Kidz tailgate that has given over 6,000 tickets to local kids that have never been to a Griz game before. Others are set up to enjoy a day with friends and family.

Eric Taber, director of communications for the football team at UM, said that Montana has one of the most unique tailgating scenes in the country.

"Communities gather every week, and they come from places like Sydney and Glasgow, Montana," Taber said. "They drive 10-plus hours to be here and to have those tailgates, so it's really just an incredible community event, and it's beautiful. Grassy fields right along the river, right at the base of the mountain. It really is just picturesque."

Taber added that the University's facilities team puts in a lot of work to set up the area for tailgates. The crew puts down ribbons and posts to mark where tailgating spots are. They shut down Campus Drive to allow RVs to park the night before. UM also sets up lights for the area if it is a night game.

"There's a big effort to get this place ready," Taber said.

If you don't have a tailgate of your own, Taber said that the Grizzly Scholarship Association's tailgate is open to everybody.

"It's sort of the heart of the tailgate area," he said. "You can easily just walk around there and bump into people you know. It's a really easy way to have a fun time."

Along with the GSA tailgate, many others are welcoming to strangers.

Josh Trexler is a 2006 graduate of UM and said that he loves the "family atmosphere" of tailgating.



ABOVE: A man holds up tickets to the crowd during a pregame tailgate outside Washington-Grizzly Stadium on Sept. 5. **EMBRY ERICSON | MONTANA KAIMIN**

BELOW: The Montambulance, a Griz-themed ambulance, sits outside of the Washington-Grizzly Stadium during a pregame tailgate on Sept. 5. **EMBRY ERICSON | MONTANA KAIMIN**



"It's a big group of people [at our tailgate], but we always love running into new people," Trexler said. "We always love meeting people traveling in from out of town and they love hanging out here."

Trexler is the owner of the Mon-

tambulance, a 40-year-old ambulance that he and his group use to carry their tailgating equipment, one of several retired emergency vehicles that have been turned into tailgating machines at UM.

Adam Day is the owner of the Griz Mobile, an ambulance that used to serve

the Sunshine Mine in Idaho's Silver Valley. The 1967 International Travelall used to carry miners down the mountain when they were injured, but now attracts Griz fans to Day's tailgate.

"When people see it, their heads turn," Day said. "They like to say hi, they like to see it going down the road, and it's an enjoyment to drive."

Day said that for him it doesn't matter what happens in the game. He is always inviting others to his party.

"A couple years ago, [Northern Arizona University] beat us on the field, and as [its fans] walked off, I congratulated them and offered them a beverage," he said. "I get that stuff all the time."

One of the opposing fans last weekend was Todd Ward, whose son is a senior at Drake University. Ward said UM tailgating is very different from Drake's.

"I enjoy the mountains and the grass and the sun," Ward said. "Everybody here has been very friendly and cordial, and with the food trucks and everything, it's a great environment."

Another thing that makes UM's tailgating unique is the fact that fans can leave and reenter the stadium at halftime, something different from other Football Championship Subdivision stadiums.

Taber had a unique perspective as someone who was a student at UM, but is now very closely involved with the football team.

"When I was a student and growing up here, running out to the tailgates at halftime and having another beer was a pretty appealing thing," he said. "Now when I work with the football team, it's a stark difference in that second half. I notice it much more than I ever did as a student just how empty it is in [the stadium]."

Taber said that the emptiness of the stadium could be a big deal for UM.

"When [other teams] come in here and they're under pressure from the north end zone folks, they finally get a little reprieve in the third quarter," Taber said. "We would love it if more came back in before the second half kicked off because they really do make a big difference in the game."

Kick in the new season

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Some may see running as exhausting, but at the University of Montana, its cross country programs show otherwise. Through the rigor and pain, they find stability in the cohesive team they have developed.

Although the Big Sky Conference preseason rankings are against UM's men's and women's programs, with a sixth-place prediction for the men and a tenth-place prediction for the women, the Griz hope to prove otherwise. Regardless, the teams demonstrate their strengths by building a supportive network of hardworking runners.

"Cross country is a very community-oriented sport," senior Malia Bradford said. "[We're] continuing to build that unity between the girls' team and between the guys' and girls' team."

When you run as many hills and 5Ks as cross country runners do, you tend to spend more time together through the miles, momentum and misery. While cross country may seem like an individual sport, the UM team proves that it goes beyond personal records. According to the players, it pushes your team to start strong and finish even stronger together.

"You form unique bonds with people because you are all suffering and in pain together," Bradford said. "[It is] furthering and deepening that unity, and also building confidence in our own individual abilities and our abilities as a team together."

Senior Ashtyn Wagner knows there is no better way to establish a relationship within the women's team than to do everything together.

"We tease each other, you know? We cried together, we laughed together, shed tears, shed blood. I mean, it's just a crazy team bond, because we do the worst together, but the best things together too," Wagner said.

As for the men's team, the bond is as thick as blood.

"[We're] brothers, really. We fight a little bit sometimes, but we always love each other. We spend a lot of time



Senior Griz cross country runners Malia Bradford, Henry Ballinger and Ashtyn Wagner pose for a portrait in the Champions Center on Sept. 2. **PARKER HOWERY | MONTANA KAIMIN**

together, so we develop these insane dynamics," senior Henry Ballinger said.

With a connection this close, you want to share big and little wins with your team. Crossing the finish line is not only a time placement when you have teammates cheering you on every step of the way. According to Bradford, from the competitive cluster at the start to the draining kick at the finish, it's all in good fun.

"Seeing those celebrations makes it so much sweeter to share the highs and the lows of the sport together," Bradford said. "Having fun and giving ourselves a fair chance to be competitive, because at the end of the day, we wanna be as competitive as we can."

Winning isn't the only way to be successful in a competition. To Ballinger, it stems from equal team contributions, hard work and giving it your all.

"I don't care about what place we get at conference. I don't care what time I get. I don't care about the top guy, I don't care what he runs," Ballinger said. "[To] see that everybody else gave it their all,

that's what defines success for me."

As Doug Fraley enters his fifth season as the men's and women's cross country head coach, he and the programs had a promising first race. On Sept. 4, the teams competed in Bozeman at the Montana State University Bobcat Twilight meet.

Junior Luke Mest placed fourth overall out of 99 participants on the men's side, with a time of 14:50 flat. On the women's side, junior Olivia Coll, junior Heidi Olson and Bradford placed 12th, 15th and 16th overall out of 81 participants.

The men's team placed second out of 11 teams, and the women's team placed third out of 10 teams.

These speedy times and dedication don't come without sacrifice. Ballinger saw the preparation for these meets well before the start of school.

"To see the progression that everyone's gonna have, we've all put in so much work over the summer," Ballinger said. "It's definitely the proudest I've ever been to be a part of this team."

SPORTS BRIEFS

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COMEBACK WIN

The University of Montana's volleyball team completed its third win of the season after taking down California Baptist University three sets to two on Sept. 5.

Both teams were aggressive with the ball, as the two squads combined for 26 service aces and 24 service errors.

While California Baptist University was better on the offensive than the Grizzlies, committing 14 aces, the Grizzlies got it going on the defense, forcing 15 errors.

After trading sets, the Griz were able to secure the victory in the fifth set with a score of 15-9.

"I'm really proud of our win this morning. It wasn't the prettiest match on either side of the court, but I think we were able to find enough stabilization to outlast them," head coach Allison Lawrence said. "You don't always get the match you want, but you have to love the match that you are in. I think this one tested us culturally and mentally in ways that will pay us back big time once we get to conference."

After playing three games in three days, UM will have a week off before heading to Oregon for the Oregon State Tournament.

POTENTIAL 3-0 FOR THE GRIZ

After beating Drake University, the University of Montana's football team will return to Washington-Grizzly Stadium to play the Utah Tech Trailblazers on Sept. 12.

The Griz have won both of its two matches against the Trailblazers. In the last game, the Griz finished with a score of 43-13.

UM fans can expect the game to be high scoring as the average points scored for the Griz in the matchup is 37 points.

Quarterback Keali'i Ah Yat currently leads the Griz in passing touchdowns and yards. Eli Gillman, who gained 81 yards when UM last played the Trailblazers back in 2023, leads the team in rushing yards and touchdowns.

The Griz hope to see Washington-Grizzly Stadium packed in a sea of camo as the team celebrates military appreciation and band night.

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