

# MONTANA KAIMIN

## UM's Cult Connection

Tracing sociology professor Rob Balch's connection to Heaven's Gate nearly 50 years after its inception

Story by  
Claire Shinner

News  
Student Mental  
Health  
Page 6

Arts  
Bieber Fever  
Page 12

Sports Opinion  
Inequality in  
the NCAA  
Page 15

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Cover Photo  
Claire Shinner



The Montana Kaimin is a weekly independent student newspaper at the University of Montana. The Kaimin office and the University of Montana are located on land originally inhabited by the Salish People. Kaimin is a derivative of a Salish language word, “Qe’ymin,” that is pronounced kay-MEEN and means “book,” “message” or “paper that brings news.”

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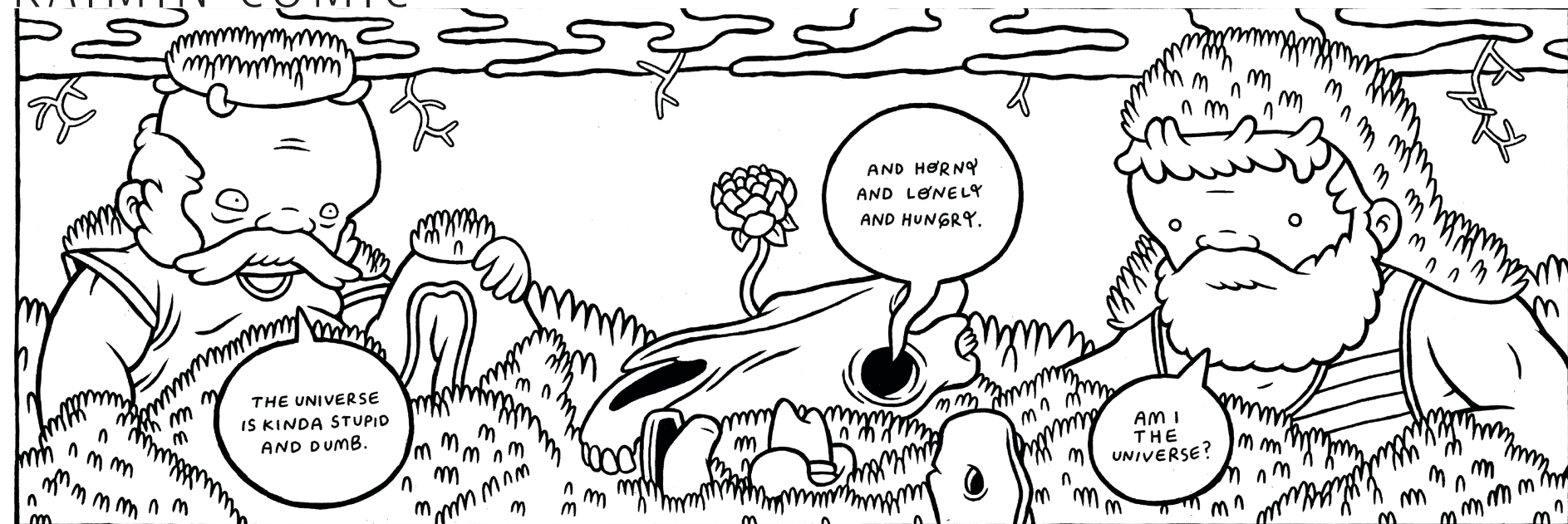
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## KAIMIN COMIC



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## Vaccine appointments are opening for everyone. You aren’t a bad person for taking one.

Last week, Montana’s Gov. Greg Gianforte announced that Montana would be opening up COVID-19 vaccination availability to the entire population April 1, which is huge and exciting news. It’s another reminder that we are inching ever closer to the end of this pandemic, only a little over a year since it truly took over every aspect of our lives.

The announcement comes ahead of Montana’s original Phase 1C rollout plan — including frontline essential workers, people in congregate living and prisons and those with medical conditions not covered under 1B+. It’s easy to see how this news can be frustrating for those who were waiting patiently for their turn in line, only to be disregarded and told they have to schedule their appointment along with the rest of the populace.

But a part of us is still excited, and we’re sure you are too. And because this news is so big, and April is going to start looking very different from the previous 12 months, we wanted to take a second and talk about the feeling you might have — whether or not you should be getting a vaccine

appointment. Vaccine imposter syndrome, if you will.

We can’t be the only ones who have felt the tension. The confusion, and potential guilt, regarding whether or not you should call and make an appointment. Maybe you fell into one of the earlier phases, but thought, “other people need it more than me.” Maybe you did sign up to get one. Maybe you’ve been asked what sort of condition made you qualify for a vaccine, jokingly or as a serious accusation.

And knowing that 1C was passed over in favor of opening appointments to the general population can just accentuate those feelings.

These are personal medical topics, and they’re awkward conversation starters, too. No one should have to explain why they were able to get a vaccine. What matters is that they got one. In almost every case, no one is cheating the system, but actually qualifying in some way.

And Kaimin reporting shows that Curry Health Center officials are relieved to be offering the vaccine to more people who want it, as previous vaccination events at

the Adams Center have run without full appointment schedules and ended with unused vaccines, which have a short shelf life and must be discarded.

So it’s frustrating — for sure — to know that 1C is being expanded to include Montana adults. But now, Montana runs less of a risk of unused appointments and doses. It will just come at the cost of a more intense rush for appointments, and we know it can be tempting to delay signing up for one so that someone else can.

Because it seems like the more noble thing to do, right? A lot of us are young and healthy, and maybe we’ve already had COVID-19, or maybe all of our classes are online and so are our jobs. So why should we take a dose from someone who is more deserving? Isn’t that the better way to play our part — the way we’ve been playing our part since March 2020?

But we’re (almost) all going to want one eventually. And if you can get one, you should get one. And you shouldn’t feel guilty about it either.

Of course, the choice is up to you. With the entire adult population of Montana

eligible for a vaccine in two weeks, appointments will be full. But you don’t need to tell yourself that by not taking this opportunity, you’re playing your part. It can be easy to feel like you’re taking the vaccine from your sweet 80-year-old professor, but the fact is, Montana had the infrastructure in place to offer them vaccines earlier. And by taking from federal vaccine distributors like Walgreens or Albertsons (instead of nursing homes or private healthcare clinics) you are helping ensure vaccines don’t go to waste.

When it comes to “playing our part,” this is the next step. When you’re able to schedule a vaccine appointment, you aren’t taking that dose away from someone. You’re making sure there is one less person in a grocery store who is vulnerable, one less person who could transmit among your family, one less person in a hospital bed.

When you get your vaccine, we’re all one step closer to the end of this pandemic.

**Like it? Hate it? Wish we were dead?**  
email us your opinions at  
[editor@montanakaimin.com](mailto:editor@montanakaimin.com)

## ‘SOLD OUT!’ at the ZACC



An actor holds up a “severed finger” in a bag during a dress rehearsal for the Zootown Arts Community Center production of “SOLD OUT!: The Staged Reading” on Saturday, March 20. The play, by Jay Buchanan, is a comedy about a first date that takes an awkward turn. **Photo by Lukas Prinos**

## SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

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

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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.

Answers to Last Week’s Sudoku:

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

## WHY RUN FOR ASUM SENATE?

-represent students- -make changes on campus-

-fight for your passions- -get involved!-

find more information at [umt.edu/asum/elections](http://umt.edu/asum/elections)



Briefs: Budget cuts, Jermain Charlo and possible Blackfeet herd immunity

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Faculty and staff opposed to \$2.6 million cut to Humanities and Sciences

Anonymous faculty and staff opposed a possible \$2.6 million cut to the College of Humanities and Sciences budget for the fiscal year 2023. A document titled “Reject the Proposed New Budget Model for the University of Montana,” states that Humanities and Sciences have been at the brunt of UM budget cuts since 2015, accounting for 68% of total budget cuts across the University.

“If the new budget model is adopted, it will do deep and irreversible damage both to CHS and to the University as a whole,” states the document. “Many tenured faculty in CHS will be fired, entire CHS departments may be eliminated and every CHS department will be severely weakened; in turn, this will weaken the many departments outside of CHS that depend upon the essential courses that CHS provides.”

The document delves into the flaws of UM’s new budget model and compares the Humanities and Sciences budget to other colleges. While the College of Humanities and Sciences will likely lose more than 10% of its funding, budgets for colleges like health and forestry will increase. The faculty and staff created an email, betterumbudget@gmail.com, for the concerned

or inquisitive.

The Kaimin is following this story. Check our website for updates.

Rally for Jermain Charlo outside MPD

Friends and family of Jermain Charlo, a missing Salish woman, gathered outside the Missoula Police Department Friday waving signs and chanting calls for action. Charlo has been missing for nearly three years. She was last seen at 1 a.m. on June 16, 2018, outside the Badlander Bar in Missoula. But, reporting from Connie Walker, the journalist behind the podcast “Stolen: The Search For Jermain,” revealed information that was previously unknown to Charlo’s loved ones. Charlo’s phone was tracked to her ex-boyfriend’s home from 2 to 10 a.m. the day she disappeared.

Charlo’s family called for more action and transparency from police, asking for the ex-boyfriend to be investigated, according to NBC Montana. Missoula Police Detective Guy Baker told NBC Montana that the case is still under investigation and he hasn’t stopped looking for Charlo.

Blackfeet Reservation 95% vaccinated

The Blackfeet Indian Reservation, in northwestern Montana, may have reached herd immunity from COVID-19. According to a tweet from Blackfeet COVID-19 Incident Command, 95% of the reservation’s eligible population have been vaccinated from the virus.

Native Americans were prioritized in vaccine distribution, as the population is one of the most at-risk. According to the Guardian, Native Americans have died from the virus at roughly double the rate of white Americans.

Nathan St. Goddard, owner of the Johnson’s of St. Mary campground near Glacier National Park, tweeted, “My reservation may be the first jurisdiction in the world with a herd immunity vaccination rate,” after the announcement.

According to the World Health Organization, it’s not yet known how much of the population needs to be immunized to reach herd immunity, but it does say vaccination is the only for sure way to get there. While people can develop a temporary immunity to the virus after contracting it, the WHO said it’s still not known how long the immunity will last.

COVID-19 Missoula update

Montana will open up vaccinations for all residents aged 16 or older on April 1, after an announcement from Gov. Greg Gianforte. The Kaimin ran a more in depth story on this announcement online. The Missoula City-County Health Department also announced a plan on Thursday to open up large events again. The plan will be enacted once Missoula County reaches a vaccination rate of 600 doses per 1,000 eligible Missoula County residents and has a trend of fewer than 25 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents in the two weeks prior to the event.

- As of Monday, Missoula County:
- Administered more than 50,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, 5,000 more than last week.
  - Completed nearly 17,000 second doses, which fully immunize the recipient.
  - Had 140 active cases of COVID-19, down seven from last week.
- Montana:
- Administered more than 406,000 doses, up 40,000 from last week.
  - Completed close to 160,000 second doses, up almost 20,000 in a week.
  - Had just less than 1,000 active cases, down roughly 100 from last week.

Blotter: Mystery blood, thieves and more thieves

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Between March 11 and 17, UMPD reported 11 crimes on and around campus, making it 2021’s busiest week for crime so far. Theft was the most common crime, claiming six of the 11 cases.

FRIDAY 03/12: NO KEY, NO PROBLEM

A resident of Helena Court was cited with criminal mischief when they broke a window to get into their apartment in the middle of the night. Could they have gotten a spare key? Yes. Did they bust open a window instead of getting the key? Yes. Did UM Housing forgive their decision? Not a chance. The resident was referred for student conduct.

SUNDAY 03/14: BUSTED

What started as a medical call ended as a possession of dangerous drugs case early

Sunday morning in Knowles Hall. Officers arrived to assist a resident who was reportedly feeling unwell. After some questioning, UMPD found the student had been smoking some greenery and was below the age of 21. They were referred for a law violation and a night of fun came to an abrupt ending.

SUNDAY 03/14: MYSTERY BLOOD

For those of you who saw the blood splatter and a crew of UMPD officers outside Eck Hall early Sunday, the answer to your question is probably not what you expected. While the scene was documented, there are no known human victims nor was anybody near the blood when officers arrived. Lt. Brad Giffin thinks the only victim was an injured deer that UMPD put down the day prior on Campus Drive. Giffin believes students may have had some fun with Bambi’s remains before the body was removed. He also added that if there was

a fight, or another cause for the blood, no one reported it. A work order was put in to have the blood cleaned.

MONDAY 03/15: MISSION UNSUCCESSFUL

Officers responded to an alarm set off at the University golf course Monday morning. UMPD arrived to find a sliding glass door was broken and the building had been rummaged through. There were empty deposit bags thrown about the room, indicating the culprit was looking for money that fortunately was not around for the offender to take. The case is open, and UMPD is attempting to identify the culprit using video footage. Although nothing was stolen, the suspect will likely be cited with burglary and criminal mischief because they entered with intent to commit a crime.

MONDAY 03/15: MISSING BIKES

Officers responded to Knowles Hall early Monday evening when a student reported their bike was stolen. The bike was secured with a combination U Lock, but the bandit managed to unlock it and take off with the precious cargo. There are no suspects and “apparently there is quite a bit of information on YouTube on how to defeat those U Locks that have a combination,” Lt. Giffin said. UM fell victim to another bike theft the previous day from Coloma Court. This cycle was secured with a cable lock, but apparently locking mechanisms are not stopping those in need of two-wheel transportation.

TUESDAY 03/16: STOLEN PIGGY BANK

Someone took the phrase “get that coin” a little too seriously around 2 a.m. Tuesday. Another thief stole a jar of coins totaling \$10 from an unlocked vehicle in the Lewis and Clark parking lot. There are no suspects at this time.

The Weekly Crossword by Margie E. Burke

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
17					18					19				
20				21				22						
		23					24							
25	26					27					28	29	30	
31					32						33			
34				35						36				
37				38						39				
40			41					42						
			43					44						
45	46	47				48						49	50	
51						52					53			
54					55						56			
57					58						59			

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ACROSS

- 1 Said, as a farewell  
5 Selling point  
10 Greek cheese  
14 Onassis et al.  
15 Close call  
16 State positively  
17 Catchall abbr.  
18 Persistent badgering  
20 Popular pasta  
22 Second point in tennis  
23 Eyeball benders  
24 Diagnostic test  
25 Gold miner’s water trough  
27 Major staff changes  
31 Not windy  
32 Selected  
33 A Bobsey twin  
34 Mosque V.I.P.  
35 Emergency signal  
36 Overfill  
37 Toothed wheel  
38 At attention  
39 Adorable one  
40 Like some reactions  
42 One in the red  
43 Need a bath badly  
44 Kind of ray  
45 Send with an email  
48 Small bit of matter  
51 1964 Elvis movie  
53 Sound of impact  
54 Adjust, as a piano  
55 Audacity  
56 Advance
- 58 Went out with  
59 Apt to snap
- 26 Tart fruit  
27 Crude dwelling  
28 Single  
29 Place for a barbecue  
30 Contemptuous look  
32 Court employee  
35 Plenty of leeway  
36 Foreign-film feature  
38 Tape deck button  
39 Small change  
41 Pencil part  
42 Made a sudden move  
44 Purplish-pink shade  
45 Crafts partner  
46 Talk up  
47 Sandwich fish  
48 Dessert wine  
49 Air bag?  
50 Small whirlpool  
52 Actress Arthur

DOWN

- 1 Pebbles’ pal, when doubled  
2 “Tosca” tune  
3 Talk out of  
4 Reality avoidance  
5 Like sailors on leave  
6 Hardly sufficient  
7 Wrapped garment  
8 Victorian, for one  
9 Legal precedent  
10 Feast or \_\_\_\_  
11 “...happily \_\_\_\_ after”  
12 Campsite sight  
13 Pretentious  
19 Burger go-with  
21 Marathon, e.g.  
24 Out of funds  
25 “Lip” or “slap” follower

Answers to Last Week’s Crossword:

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

The cult-ier the better

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Have you ever thought to yourself, “Man, I kinda want to join a cult just to see if I could resist the brainwashing?” We strongly advise against that (though, not to say we haven’t thought the same things — I mean, just think about all the friendships you could forge). In our effort to steer you away from that path, let’s focus on the cult classics instead.

ARIES (MARCH 21–APRIL 19): Aries, don’t take this the wrong way, but you guys are kinda the embodiment of, “Wait, you haven’t heard of Quentin Tarantino? Oh my God, you can’t call yourself a film-lover.” So of course your cult film is “Kill Bill.” It’s the violence as an expression of emotion, for us.

TAURUS (APRIL 20–MAY 20): POV: “The Blair Witch Project,” but you’re the witch. The fucking Intro to Film students have disrupted your afternoon nap, hiking into the forest with nothing but a literal paper map, compass and a can-do attitude. Now it’s time for your revenge.

GEMINI (MAY 21–JUNE 20): “Rocky Horror Picture Show.” Gems, you have the duality. You are constantly serving us Dr. Frankenfurter. And, you’re just ambiguous enough (in everything, take your pick — sexuality, gender, morality) to deserve the mantle of cultiest of the classics.

CANCER (JUNE 21–JULY 22): Oh lord Cancer, here we go again. Our favorite crustacean of the Zodiac couldn’t be paired with any cult classic except “Mamma Mia.” We could easily see you falling for three separate people, not realizing you’ve trapped yourself in a love-rectangle that requires musical accompaniment to work through.

LEO (JULY 23–AUG. 22): Rich and successful business person by day, serial killer by night? Leos, “American Psycho,” is secretly the plot you’d live your life by. And we hate to buy into stereotypes, but it is the most flashy of the cult classics, just like you.

VIRGO (AUG. 23–SEP. 22): Virgo, if this was the late 1980s and you were in high school, you know people would be drawing disturbing connections between you and the “Heathers” group. It’s the matching

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laptop case, wallet and nails, probably. Just avoid getting murdered in a musical montage by any avenging boyfriends, and you’ll be good.

LIBRA (SEP. 23–OCT. 22): You remember that montage where Elle Woods is power walking on the treadmill and reading her law textbook? Yeah, that’s giving us major Libra vibes. Of course you guys clock in as the beloved “Legally Blonde.” What, like it’s hard?

SCORPIO (OCT. 23–NOV. 21): My lord, Scorpio. As one of the most self-important signs we know, we had to give you one of the most annoyingly self-important cultist films. If an unnecessarily mansplained reddit thread could be personified as a movie, that movie would be “The Room.” And that just feels right.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22–DEC. 22): Sags, you are so fetch. Whether you align more with Regina George or Gretchen Wieners, it’s undeniable that, as the “Mean Girls” of the Zodiac, you should be paired with the cult classic of the same name. We know you have a Burn Book, bubs. Good luck with that.

CAPRICORN (DEC. 23–JAN. 19): Ah yes, the most classic cult film for the most classic sign. What starts out as a plot that could belong to any gangster movie at all, like you, Capricorns, “Pulp Fiction,” quickly reveals its layers. Don’t let the Tarantino dudebros know we’re praising the movie, though.

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20–FEB. 18): We don’t know why “Troll 2” comes up when searching “cult classic films,” but “Troll 1” doesn’t. That energy fits your vibe though, Aquarians. You’re too quirky for the first movie to shoot right to cult-classic fame. Nah, let’s make ‘em wait a little for the real deal.

PISCES (FEB. 19–MARCH 20): Idk, Pisces, we just think you’re cute funny little guys with a dark side, of course. Much like the witch trio in “Hocus Pocus,” you, too, give off the energy of potential immortality.



# UM staff, students, address suicide and mental health on a college campus

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Ashley Griffiths moved from Big Bear, California, to the University of Montana to face the unknowns and fears of becoming a college freshman away from home, coupled with COVID-19 restrictions. Her battle with mental health and the surrounding stigma made her transition more difficult.

Griffiths, an athletic training major, has been struggling with her mental health since her early years of high school.

“It’s hard to reach out and actually be open with my feelings,” she said. “So, I feel like it goes both ways. People need to reach out to others.”

College students in Montana and across the nation

cers on campus has increased since the pandemic began. Welfare checks are calls made by concerned friends or family requesting a student be checked on.

Giffin said the welfare cases usually involve mental health issues, including depression and suicidal thoughts. Officers’ protocol is to physically check on a student and report back to the people who made the call.

“Most people in college ... are away from their normal support group,” he said. “You couple that with being restricted to your room and not being able to get out and make friends and have conversations — we think that those things definitely have an impact on

with people in her hall.

“[Residents] can come talk to me as much as they want,” she said. “There are some things you don’t want to talk about to your RA, but I am here for all my ladies.”

Davia said there are a variety of resources she can utilize to support students or refer them to, such as the Student Advocacy Resource Center, or SARC.

Rebecca White, a freshman and dance major at UM, was diagnosed with depression in elementary school. She said COVID-19 worsened her mental health as social distancing and the inability to physically connect with friends made her feel isolated.

don’t talk enough about suicide and depression. He said while there has not been a jump in suicides, there has been a noticeable increase in depression and anxiety amid the global pandemic.

Rosston believes that, while the topic may not be pleasant to speak about, disregarding it causes further isolation to those in need of support. He said the only way we can start to address it is by letting students know it is okay to talk about it.

While COVID-19 has raised awareness, Rosston said suicide is a cultural issue. “It takes a cultural shift in thinking in order to address it,” he said.



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Rosston also said the suicide conversation should begin before students start their college careers. He thinks freshman orientation should include suicide risk awareness and prevention, in addition to sexual harassment and alcohol training.

have had to take on the challenge of leaving home and starting over in a new place amid the global pandemic. Since last year, officers at UM’s police department have had to check on students more often, depression and anxiety have spiked and students overall are in need of more support. There are places on campus to find mental health resources, but some say more action is needed.

Upon arriving at UM, Griffiths felt she had nobody to go to. She felt alone. Then, when she did build trust and open up to somebody, they didn’t know how to deal with it.

Griffiths said the stigma surrounding depression and mental health tends to be more intense in older generations. She said it is overlooked and not made a high enough priority.

Brad Giffin, a lieutenant at the University of Montana Police Department, said the number of welfare checks conducted by offi-

a student’s mental health.”

Giffin sits on the University’s Behavioral Intervention Team, which he said has also seen an increase in referrals.

Behavioral intervention referrals are made for any student of concern, whether for depression or struggles with school. The team, which also consists of counselors and other police officers, meets every Thursday to provide each student with resources to help them. Anyone can submit a referral through the University website.

Dorm living is not the same experience as it was pre-pandemic. Resident assistants throughout campus are working to improve morale and assist residents struggling with their mental health.

Kieli Davia, RA for the third floor of Craig Hall, said a majority of her training was learning how to handle various mental health scenarios and the importance of checking in

White misses the strong support system she had with her family at home. Yet, she continues to connect with her mom via phone and has formed a strong bond with her roommate.

White also said she believes UM has done a good job making campus resources and opportunities for those who need support known to students. She especially felt like UM successfully advertised various resources to help students get through big life changes, and helped her remember she wasn’t alone, at freshman orientation.

But while Griffiths believes she has also been made well-aware of campus resources through emails, advisers and resident assistants on campus, she said she has never been reached out to.

Karl Rosston, suicide prevention coordinator at the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, said people

# Bill aiming to redefine personhood could have consequences for women, university students

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Montana House Bill 337 aims to create a constitutional amendment that would define a fetus as a person, which would have potential impacts on women’s bodily autonomy.

The bill, sponsored by Republican Rep. Caleb Hinkle, states: “... the word ‘person’ refers to all members of mankind at any stage of development, beginning at the stage of fertilization or conception, regardless of age, health, level of functioning, or condition of dependency.”

HB 337, which will require two-thirds approval from both the House and Senate before being sent to voters, would amend the state constitution to define personhood. The bill’s supporters say the amendment is needed as “person” is not currently defined under Montana law. However, opponents argue that it puts a woman’s right to have control over her own body, as with abortions, at risk.

According to Hinkle, HB 337 is meant to give meaning to personhood and not to threaten abortion rights.

“This bill puts a value statement in law that we as a state recognize the human dignity of everyone in society,” Hinkle stated in an email.

As a proposed constitutional amendment, this bill requires a two-thirds vote to pass in the state House and Senate. With a united Republican caucus in the state House, the bill would have exactly the two-thirds majority necessary to pass on to the state Senate. Should it pass the Senate with a two-thirds majority, HB 337 will then go to voters on the November 2022 ballot for a final decision.

According to Sara Hayden, a communications professor at the University of Montana who has studied reproductive rights rhetoric for a decade, legislation similar to this has been proposed in other states, but those voters have rejected the ratification.

Hayden said that philosophers, scientists and those in the field of law, among other higher education fields, all have different definitions of what a person is. She said two Supreme Court cases — Roe v. Wade and Brennan v. Casey — have both rejected the anti-abortion argument that a fetus is, by definition, a person.

Hayden said defining a fetus as a person can lead to a loss of women’s liberty. She said in the context of the Constitution, it makes sense to allow women to make their

own choices regarding their bodies.

“Definitions are always social constructions, and when we have a definition that people disagree with at high levels when it will affect bodily autonomy, it can take away liberty,” Hayden said.

But Hinkle disagreed, stating that HB 337 does not mention taking away liberties from women, and that is not the bill’s intended purpose.

Hinkle also said the bill would not have implications on the university system or university students.

Maggie Bornstein, ASUM’s student political action director said, while ASUM has concerns about HB 337 and is trying to involve students, the organization hasn’t lobbied on it specifically. Even though the bill fits within ASUM’s legislative priorities, Bornstein said ASUM doesn’t want to stand in the way of people telling their personal narratives.

However, Bornstein did say the bill has potential implications for college students. Though it does specify that legal action

cannot be taken against a woman who unintentionally harms her fetus, the bill does not limit potential legal action against abortions.

Bornstein said the implications of this bill for students are dramatic. She said a pregnancy can have a large impact on one’s ability to complete a college education, as it can affect students’ mental health. She also added that a ban on abortion in the state would have the potential to marginalize about half of the school community.

“I have had an abortion,” Bornstein said. “I know that when I was pregnant last fall, it had a really profound impact on my ability to be the student I usually am.”

Due to her personal experience, Bornstein said there is no doubt in her mind that students should be able to access safe and legal abortions in Montana.

While HB 337 would not outlaw abortions specifically, according to Hayden, it does pose a threat to women’s liberty in having a choice.

Hayden said she is very concerned about the bill passing. But she said that when

people start to look at the implications HB 337 could have for women, she believes they will reject it as an electorate if it makes it to the ballot.

Bornstein said any students interested in getting involved with this can contact her. She said there is a script available for those wanting to submit online testimony or call in. She added that Planned Parenthood Advocates of Montana is also a good resource for students interested in being involved with this bill.

HB 337 passed its second reading in the House on March 18 with the necessary two-thirds vote. The bill will have a third reading in the House next. Should it pass, it will go to the Senate where it will also need to pass with a two-thirds vote.

“I would hope that all legislators would agree that all human beings should be considered people,” Hinkle stated in an email. “But the Republican caucus was unified on this today and it passed second reading with the necessary two-thirds.”



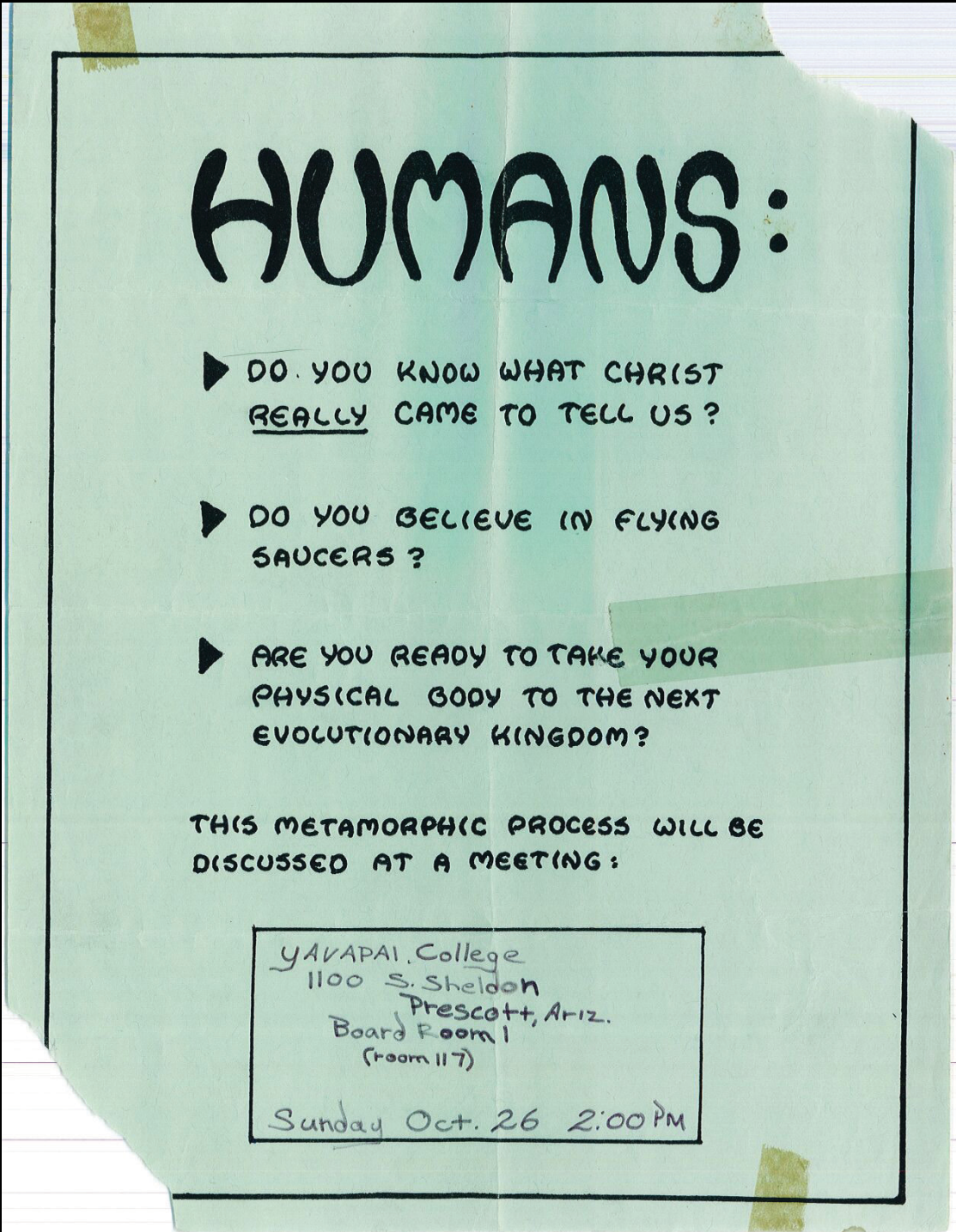
The Montana State Capitol building in Helena, Montana. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO | MEGAPIXL



# UM's Cult Connection

Tracing sociology professor Rob Balch's connection to Heaven's Gate nearly 50 years after its inception

Story by Claire Shinner



CONTRIBUTED

Though he had no background in religious studies, sociology professor Rob Balch wanted to research the New Age, cult-like sects popping up in the Southwestern deserts.

It was 1975, when religious cults had seemingly grasped the world — the massive Jonestown massacre would occur three years later — and Balch found himself following a so-called “Jesus Freak” (a common term in the 1960s) named Gary in Sedona, Arizona. He had been studying alternative and fringe religions, though the “Jesus Freaks” denounced the fringe groups that were emerging at the time.

Balch — who was then on unpaid leave from the University of Montana — and Gary left the Christian coffeehouse they’d been hanging out at, when he noticed a poster on the wall. Before Gary could tear it up and throw it on the ground, calling it “the work of the devil in everyday life,” Balch grabbed the poster. It read:

HUMANS:

- DO YOU KNOW WHAT CHRIST REALLY CAME TO TELL US?
- DO YOU BELIEVE IN FLYING SAUCERS?
- ARE YOU READY TO TAKE YOUR PHYSICAL BODY TO THE NEXT EVOLUTIONARY KINGDOM?

THIS METAMORPHIC PROCESS WILL BE DISCUSSED AT A MEETING

This discovery came as Balch began noticing wealthy Southern Californians had moving to the area, and thus a growing presence of people interested in spiritual and New Age metaphysical ideas that had emerged in the small city.

“After my parents moved down there, a couple years went by and this big New Age bookstore springs up and I start to notice all of these other things, and I thought, ‘Wow, this is a community where something’s really happening,’” Balch said.

A week later, Balch drove 60 miles through brilliant red rock canyons to Yavapai College in Prescott, Arizona, to attend the meeting of a nameless group of doomsdayers, eventually called Heaven’s Gate.

Little did Balch know that this group was one which reporters and curious internet sleuths would be contacting him about for almost 50 years to come. Balch’s work, which would lead sociological studies of Heaven’s Gate, has recently been featured in the 2020 HBO Max documentary, “Heaven’s Gate: The Cult of Cults,” nearly 24 years after the group’s infamous mass suicide in 1997.

Balch’s work with the group fundamentally reoriented his sociology career. From going undercover in the cult in the mid 1970s, to later interviewing over 60 ex-mem-

bers, Balch has become known as an expert in alternative religions and cults.



The unusual tale of Heaven’s Gate has captivated the public since the first reports of a 20-person group going missing from the coastal town of Waldport, Oregon, in 1975. They left after the cult’s first public recruitment meeting, on Sept. 14, 1975, starting a cycle of news coverage that would push Heaven’s Gate into the mainstream. People left family, friends and jobs behind after only two meetings.

“When something appeared on the Walter Cronkite show, you knew that it was going to be national news and that’s what happened,” Balch said. “They broke the story of all those people that had disappeared over in Waldport, Oregon, and so suddenly there’s all these articles appearing in the newspaper; Who are these people, where have they gone, what’s happening, is this a fraud?”

Fraud or not, Heaven’s Gate was one of many up-and-coming alternative religious groups, including the “Jesus Freaks” — “hippies who converted to Christianity,” as Balch calls them — that formed in the 1960s and ‘70s across the country.

The public quickly associated the workings of the group with the Manson Family, one of the best-known cults in popular culture at the time. However, the two leaders of Heaven’s Gate — then calling themselves Bo and Peep — didn’t seem dangerous, as Balch later concluded. They led their followers, some reported missing by their family and friends, at their own free will. Members could leave the group at any time and did over the years, as Balch observed as he tracked down more ex-members.

The New Age Movement was an international social movement that emerged mainly in Western culture in the late 1960s through the ‘80s.

“The New Age Movement can be defined by its primal experience of transformation,” J. Gordon Melton, author of the New-Age Encyclopedia writes. “New-Agers have either experienced or are diligently seeking a profound personal transformation from an old, unacceptable life to a new, exciting future.”

Heaven’s Gate didn’t subscribe, exactly, to the New Age definition, but that is not to say that the group wasn’t seeking profound personal transformation.

The group’s founders, former music professor Marshall “Herff” Applewhite and registered nurse Bonnie Nettles, would go on to refer to themselves as Do and Ti or Bo and Peep, respectively. As Do (Applewhite) wrote in 1988, the two met in Houston, Texas, in the early ‘70s, after their bodies were incarnated by souls from what they called



Sawyer, a former Heaven’s Gate member, in 1994 news footage of a recruitment meeting in Missoula. During their visit, Sawyer and several other members also visited Balch at his office on campus, where they interviewed him about his research on the group. CONTRIBUTED

the “Next Level.”

“The only relationship they shared, certainly having no physical attraction toward each other, was the compulsion to discover what had brought them together and what might be their purpose,” he wrote. “They had little in common other than strong personal relationships with their Heavenly Father.”

The first public meetings of the cult were held in 1975, after Do and Ti (Nettles) left Houston and spent several months developing their connection to the Next Level. Balch guessed there were 60 to 70 people at the meeting he attended in October 1975. Sawyer, a former member, later estimated almost 200 people at the first meeting in Waldport.

They asserted they were representatives from the “Kingdom of Heaven.” According to them, God determined there was a group of people (“vehicles”) who were fit to become hosts for reincarnated souls. These souls recognized Do and Ti as the two who would lead them, and teach them what was required to leave the world behind and enter a literal and physical Heaven, called the Level Above Human, or the Next Level.

This message still exists on the Heaven’s Gate website: “What Our Purpose Is — The Simple ‘Bottom Line.’”

“Leaving behind this world included: family, sensuality, selfish desires, your own mind, and even your human body if it be required of you — all mammalian ways, thinking, and behavior,” Do wrote on May 9, 1996.

Do and Ti told their followers that a physical spacecraft would arrive to take them to the Level Above Human, where the training they received to overcome their human traits on Earth would allow them to become productive members of the Next Level.

Members followed strict guidelines, including a set of rules enacted a year or two after Balch had infiltrated the group, called the 17 Steps, which were supposed to help them overcome their humanness. They learned to identify solely with their “awakened” mind and not with their body, also called a “vehicle” or “suit of clothes.”

“When I heard about that, I recognized it as something I seemed to know, it was almost like a smelling salt,” said Sawyer when the cult came to hold a recruitment meeting

in Missoula in 1994. “It was, in a sense, an awakening that I knew that already and I was waiting for someone to come and tell me about it.”



After attending the initial meeting in Sedona and talking to the nearly 20 members who were there, Balch’s interest was piqued, and he decided to attend the optional follow-up meeting, beginning a lifelong sociological project.

“We all sat down and this woman in the group went around the circle and asked each person, ‘Are you ready?’ And when they came to me I wasn’t ready at all, but I wanted to find out what was going on here, so I said, ‘Yeah, I’m ready,’” Balch said.

After the new members and Balch, who decided to infiltrate the group, affirmed that they were ready to join, they arranged cars and camping gear and got ready to head to the site of the next meeting: Oakland, California.

They mostly traveled nomadically from city to city, presenting their message to



recruit prospective members and sitting quietly in campgrounds together, ideally “tuning in” to the Next Level. No talking was allowed among the members as they began to separate from their human lives before the group, so Balch blended in easily.

“Nobody was going to ask me about my past, nobody was going to question my motives for being there, I was not expected to speak about anything, you weren’t supposed to become friends with people, so it was a very weird group situation,” he said. “Basically, all I had to do to be a good member was keep my mouth shut and do what other people were doing.”

Balch eventually stayed with the group for six weeks along with his research partner David Taylor, then a graduate student at UM.



When Balch returned from his sabbatical infiltrating the cult, Kaimin reporter Barry Noreen covered a talk he gave on Jan. 27, 1976, in a Kaimin article titled, “Religious cultists search nation for lost, heavenly Bo and Peep.”

“Once it was all over, I had no idea what to do with all of this information, but it was just so intriguing I couldn’t let it go,” Balch said. “It seemed like the group was probably going to disintegrate, and it turned out it didn’t.”

During his time undercover, Balch took copious notes that he scribbled on any scrap of paper he could find. At one point, his

assigned partner in the cult thought he was having stomach issues because of how often he would leave to go to the bathroom to copy down his notes in private.

Balch took his notes, and he and Taylor set out on the road once again during spring break of 1976 to interview ex-members, starting in Waldport, Oregon, where the first public meeting was held. They systematically tracked down former members across the country, driving to meet them at their homes and talking to them about their experiences.

Suddenly, in the summer of 1976, Balch lost track of the cult.

The group had stopped recruiting and gone underground, therefore eliminating points of contact with the outside world (recruiting and asking for donations during their travels).

“They just kind of vanished from the public eye,” he said.

Balch was contacting the ex-members by letter, and when he lost track of the group it was difficult to find them again. He also ran out of ex-members to talk to, especially ones who knew where the cult was. Concerned parents of current members didn’t know where their children were either.

“As we were trying to track down ex-members, the people that had stayed in the group the longest were all still believers. They hadn’t become disillusioned with the group or the leaders when they left,” he said. “They left because they believed it was true, but just didn’t have the strength to continue with the process and see it to the end. So this morphed into this intermittent,

lifelong project, even though I had no idea where the group was.”



In the meantime, Balch continued to write about Heaven’s Gate, sending off papers and essays to be published in different books. His writing included a piece in Psychology Today (“Salvation in a UFO,” by him and Taylor) and an article in the American Behavioral Scientist (“Seekers and Saucers: The Role of Cultic Milieu in Joining a UFO Cult,” also authored by the pair).

Balch also continued teaching, building the curriculum for UM’s alternative religions class, which included field trips to cults in and around Montana.

In 1991, he first visited the Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT) cult in Montana, and soon took students on field trips back to the group until their leader, Elizabeth Clare Prophet, died in 2009.

“The importance of taking students on field trips is you can go to someplace where you can get a feel for the members and their lifestyles,” he said. The students even toured through the apocalyptic group’s bomb shelters.

He and groups of students have visited a range of cults, from the CUT, to Aryan Nations and a community of the Tennessee-based Twelve Tribes group in Canada, among others.

Balch said a lot of groups he and his students have visited are well-read on the academic books and essays that have been

written about them.

He said many groups are more open to observation by students because they come in with an open, non-judgmental perspective and are comfortable just listening to what’s going on around them.

“It was really the students that opened the door for me,” he said.



One day in 1994, Balch sat in his office having just sent off another essay about Heaven’s Gate for an anthology about UFO cults. It was the last thing he thought he would ever write about the group. Then, he heard someone enter his office behind him.

He turned around and saw a man and woman, identically dressed with short hair, long-sleeved shirts buttoned to the top, slacks and sneakers.

“These are cult people,” he thought. Unbeknownst to Balch, though Heaven’s Gate had shrunk over the years after he left, a core group of members remained. Their lifestyle was more strict than it had been before, especially with the implementation of the 17 Steps. And the group had adopted the way of dress that they became known for.

But they believed the time was finally coming: The spaceships were going to come to take them to the Next Level. And several members had come to Missoula on their tour of the country to recruit any remaining people interested in joining.

“One of the reasons they came to Missoula is that they knew that there was this sociol-

ogist here at the University that had been writing articles about them and they wanted to find out who I was,” Balch said.

He gave the pair a copy of the article he’d just finished and asked them to give comments on it, so he didn’t misrepresent anything.

The next day, nine members showed up, all similarly dressed. Balch recognized several longtime members, including a woman he’d traveled with back in the ’70s.

“It was pretty awkward because here I am, I’d been spying on these people and now they’re all in my office,” he said.

The members asked if they could interview Balch about his work and asked him for his opinions on them as a group. Balch thought his research had actually been some of the most positive coverage the group had gotten. He didn’t believe they were brainwashed, like other academics did, but he did tell them he thought they were a cult.

Balch has never seen the video the members took of the interview. The Kaimin corresponded with the current keepers of the Heaven’s Gate website and materials, who said they didn’t know the location of the tape.



Just three years later, the story of the eccentric group that had drawn Balch’s ongoing curiosity took a tragic and irreversible turn that would vault it into notoriety.

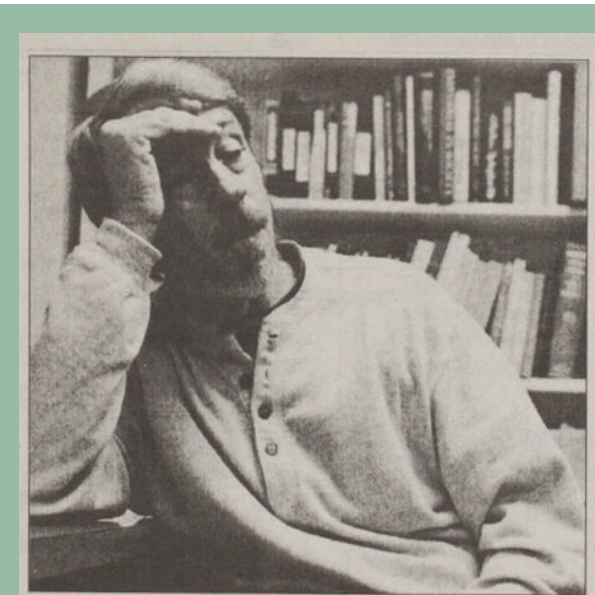
On March 26, 1997, three years after the group visited Missoula, 39 members, including their remaining leader Do (Marshall Applewhite) died by suicide with the intention of boarding a UFO they believed was a companion to the Hale-Bopp comet.

Their bodies were found in a rented mansion in Rancho Santa Fe, California, dressed in matching uniforms with black Nike sneakers and Heaven’s Gate Away Team patches on their sleeves. Most bodies were covered with purple shrouds.

“We didn’t come here to blow ourselves up. We are unblown while we’re in the human kingdom,” Do said in a video filmed one week earlier. “We could not be in a more modest circumstance than to have our human suit of clothes for the time that we are here. Now we’re about to step out of the human clothes that we are wearing.”

The group believed the act would result in boarding a spaceship to take them to the Level Above Human, where their souls would be returned to their original alien Next Level bodies from which they were reincarnated when they joined the group.

“If you can succeed at that and find no value of life here, and see it only as a training ground and as a stepping stone to move into that kingdom level, if that can occur to you, then you can go into that kingdom,” he said.



Matt McKinney/Kaimin  
*Robert Balch, a UM sociology professor, shows some wear and tear Monday after fielding five days of calls from national news media on the Heaven’s Gate cult mass suicide. Balch, who studied the cult in the 70s and 80s, said his religious cults class was packed last Friday, and, ironically, he had planned a lecture on brainwashing.*

CONTRIBUTED

“I think Do viewed the suicide as their demonstration,” Balch said. “And clearly they knew that the world was going to sit up and take notice and knew that their bodies were going to be found, so everything was so dramatically staged.”

Balch’s phone started ringing off the hook after the event, as his ongoing research made him an expert on the cult. According to reporting by Kim Skornogoski, at one point he had 160 messages from news organizations including Newsweek, Time, Inside Edition, CNN, The Los Angeles Times, Washington Post and Dateline.

After paying for all of his previous research out of his own pocket, Balch received a grant from the National Science Foundation for \$50,000, took a sabbatical the summer after the suicides and set off on the road again, enlisting Taylor to interview more ex-members.



These days, Balch fields questions about his studies or inquiries from former students from his home office, surrounded by shelves full of tapes, floppy disks and memorabilia from his studies over the years.

Being able to see behind the scenes and infiltrate the group, for the first and last time in his research career, allowed him to observe the interactions between members, leading to the unexpectedly positive papers

he wrote on them. No one was brainwashed, he believed — they were all there of their own volition and free to leave at any moment.

Since the suicides, Balch said he’s only written one paper on Heaven’s Gate, published in 2002. Looking back, he said, he doesn’t think the article is very good. He has a lot more information he’d like to get published.

“What that means is, I’ve got to get off my butt and start doing some serious writing,” Balch said. “I need to find some enterprising graduate student to do a lot of the grunt work because I’ve gotten lazy in my old age.”

Former Heaven’s Gate members are active online to this day, correcting what they see as misinformation about the group and spreading the message of Do and Ti, though none responded to requests for comment. Sawyer, a former member who stayed with the group for 19 years, posts regularly on a blog and supports the group’s ideology on Twitter and livestreams. He was also recently featured in the HBO Max documentary, as well as Balch. Sawyer did not respond to a request for an interview.

Two people, Mark and Sarah King, keep the original Heaven’s Gate website up and distribute materials through their email. The pair met while in the cult, after having been in for over a decade, and fell in love. Balch said they had to leave the group because it

was against the rules of overcoming humanness. They left the group on good terms and are believers to this day.

Balch said if it weren’t for the way that the group ended — the mass suicide — the cult probably wouldn’t have the reputation that it does today.

“What’s amazing about this to me is that this is such a tiny little group in the grand scheme of things, so insignificant,” Balch said. “Today, the only people who would know anything at all about this group other than the ex-members are the handful of academics who read the few articles that I wrote about it.

“But now, because of the mass suicide, 20-something years later people are still talking about the group, it’s in all the books on cults, every encyclopedia of unconventional religions, they’re in there and they will be for who knows how long. In a weird sort of way they kind of ensured their own immortality by committing suicide.”

*If you or someone you know is struggling with suicidal thoughts, call the National Suicide Helpline, 1-800-273-8255, for after-hours emergencies. Curry Health Center is also offering telehealth and urgent counseling; set up an appointment at 406-243-4712.*



CONTRIBUTED



# The slow burn horror of ‘Allen v. Farrow’

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Since the late ‘60s, filmmaker Woody Allen’s public persona has been built around being frank and relatable. In the first episode of HBO’s new docuseries “Allen v. Farrow,” there’s a parade of talking heads establishing the basics of Allen’s aesthetic for the uninitiated: confessional semi-autobiographical filmmaking, self-deprecating wit, fraught explorations of sex and romance. And yet, there’s something hostile and alien about the Allen seen here. The mask is peeled away, revealing a man obsessed with control — and extremely young girls. Since allegations of sexual assault against Allen first came to light in the early 1990s, he has largely been allowed

to dominate the narrative. The third episode is devoted to the media blitz Allen launched, using his considerable clout to try and keep his career afloat, even as he carried on his relationship with Soon-Yi Previn, adopted daughter of his former partner Mia Farrow. It worked. Up until a few years ago, Allen was still beloved in Hollywood, inking deals with Amazon Studios and working with trendy stars like Miley Cyrus and Timothée Chalamet. “Allen v. Farrow” marks the first time the other side of the story has been fully aired in public. Directors Amy Ziering and Kirby Dick make the canny decision to let the Farrowes speak for themselves. The result is intimate and affecting — uncomfortably so. Long sequences are narrated by Mia

Farrow and her children, Ronan and Dylan. Allen appears only in archival footage, sound bites from his 2020 memoir, and extensive home movies provided by Mia. As such, we gain an understanding of the family as fragile humans struggling with massive trauma, while Allen comes off as a looming monstrous threat. A meticulous and damning case is laid out against Allen, accused of being a predator, and of raping Dylan — his legally adopted daughter. She was only 7 years old at the time. This is where it gets hard to watch. Camcorder footage taken by Mia, where Dylan tells her mother about being taken into the attic by her father, and about the unspeakable act that followed. Mia, voice cracking, telling Allen over the phone about finding stacks of nude Polaroids of her daughter on his coffee table. Reams of

legal documents and notes from psychiatrists outlining Allen’s pattern of disturbing behavior. The viewer squirms in their seat, noting the way in which present-day Mia and Dylan’s eyes darken as they dig into their memories. Allen, if he did indeed commit these crimes, will most likely die without facing charges in criminal court. If there’s any justice to be found, it’s in the fact that his legacy is irrevocably changed. He can no longer be Woody Allen: lovable goof, Oscar darling. If anyone born after 1990 knows him at all, they almost certainly know him as Woody Allen: pervert. It’s cold comfort to survivors of sexual abuse who saw a powerful man go unpunished for so long. But at least this series can provide catharsis to Mia and Dylan themselves. Perhaps now, they can finally escape Allen’s long shadow.

# Just ice: No heat on new Bieber album

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Justin Bieber deserves a little bit of credit: The prodigal pop boy-turned-man has dramatically changed from the teenage fuck-up the world loved to hate. But his music is still blasé. Bieber’s sixth studio album, the second in just over a year, “Justice,” is a dull, 16-track slog where the superstar wunderkind begs for forgiveness, bleeds love and leaves the heart and mind uninspired. But hey, at least there’s no controversy this time around, right? Wrong. French dance duo Justice recently sent Canada’s finest a cease-and-desist letter based on the fact that the title of the album, “Justice,” uses a way-too-similar stylized cross for the “t” in the title, just like they do. Then there’s the social media outcry over samples of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the opening track “2 Much,” and then the full blown snippet of a King speech from the “MLK Interlude.” To be fair though, Bieberoni did get the samples authorized by the King family. Anyhoo, let’s get back to the music.

It is no secret that the Biebs is not exactly what the music world would call an innovator, but he is savvy when it comes to choosing what trends to ride to success. For this iteration of Mr. Biebers, he has chosen the sad-boy redemption sound with atmospheric beats akin to The Weeknd’s earlier work. Much of the record is seemingly dedicated to his wife, Hailey Baldwin Bieber. Songs like “2 Much,” “Deserve You,” “Die For You,” “Unstable” and virtually every other tune all ooze the same “babe, I can’t live without you” energy. But the weird thing is that it feels like Bieber didn’t actually write any of these songs. And he didn’t, completely. Bieber shares a song credit, on all but one track, with an army of writers. There is a disingenuous feeling about much of this album. It’s kind of like the Biebmeister is continuing his rebranding tour, especially after the actual flaming shit pile that was his most recent hit, “Yummy.” And this grown-up, love Belieber is making another tactical move in regaining respect. “Me Bieber. Me big boy with issues. Me love wife,” he must have thought when making this record. Boy does it show. But, there is one (maybe two, depend-

ing who you ask) good song on “Justice.” “Peaches” is the catchiest and most fun romp on the album. But it definitely feels a touch jarring after all of the pseudo soul-searching and loving confessionals for how much his wife means to him. He literally says that he’s got bad bitches in Georgia and gets his weed from California. How grown up he is, indeed.



CONTRIBUTED

That still does not change the fact that most of this album is super-duper boring. The music is uninspired. The lyrics are poorly-copied homework from a B+ classmate. The Bieber is still the Bieber.

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# A Marxist musical extravaganza: ‘Mother Courage and Her Children’

**CLARISE LARSON**  
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This time last year, UM theater got the devastating news: its “Spring Awakening” show was canceled due to the pandemic. This year, not only does the show go on, but the spring production of “Mother Courage and Her Children” embodies the enduring qualities of human nature and persistence that lives on 80 years after its initial release. The play, written by Bertolt Brecht during World War II, offers a Marxist view of a society reaping the brutal consequences of capitalism gone wild, told through a story set during the “Thirty Years’” religious war of the 17th century.

The director of the performance, Shane Lutz, said this play is more timely than ever. After school went online and “Spring Awakening” was canceled, he made it his mission to do everything he could to make this year’s show a reality. “It was devastating, and I refused to let that happen again. I said, ‘How can we make a piece of art in this very strange brand new time?’ The ‘Brave New World’ of today?” Lutz said. Lutz said the parallels between the inevitability of the pandemic and the human lust for war is what drew him to choosing Brecht’s play. “War is just business as usual for this world. We can’t look at war and say ‘isn’t this a terrible, evil, horrifying thing,’ because it makes a lot of sense in a society where it’s cognizant of someone else’s failure. It makes absolute sense that the people who can, profit off of war,” Lutz said.

Richard Drake, a history professor at UM, agreed. Drake said this play is a potent critique of the corruption and economic exploitation in a capitalist society. “I think that the play is very timely because it raises questions about what are the connections between our economic institutions and war; that’s the question [Brecht] always asks, and those same questions can be asked in 2021,” Drake said. Drake said he hopes people go and watch this play because the particular

value of “Mother Courage” lies in its anti-war theme, and the associations people will make with it, despite being more than 80 years old. “It’s a critique of modern warfare; it’s an anti-war play. All of his work has a Marxist ideological background, which you need to be aware of in order to really appreciate what he’s really getting at,” Drake said. “I think it’s a very timely, current play that people should see.” Kendall Seibel, who plays Mother Courage, a woman determined to benefit from the war while also scrutinizing it, said she and the rest of the cast found mirrors of themselves within the characters of the play and related to the

story more than they expected. “I think that this play is timeless, and it’s applicable to any situation, and super relevant to today. “We were able to talk about how we have been oppressed and how we see ourselves portrayed in the play has been very interesting,” Seibel said. She said she has never done anything like “Mother Courage” before. “Being able to be on a show like this was so fun — even on just an educational level — it was a teaching moment for all of us,” Seibel said. “There is so much emphasis on capitalism and living under an oppressive government and how far people have to go just to make money;

and how easily people will betray each other just to get by.” Something Seibel thinks people will relate to most is that, though Mother Courage is the protagonist, she is not a good person. In her story, she is the source of her own problems throughout. “Knowing that most of the problems that go wrong for this character are because of herself is really interesting for me to play. Because she’s not a villain; she is human,” Seibel said. Seibel said she hopes people find the same connection to the play that she has, and are able to find a form of comfort from its chaotic nature.



Cast-members of the production of “Mother Courage and Her Children” during a dress rehearsal. The production was available to stream during its March run. CONTRIBUTED | SHANE LUTZ



# Meet Ivayla Mitkova: UM Tennis’s freshman sensation

JACK MARSHALL  
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In her last six matches, University of Montana women’s tennis standout Ivayla Mitkova won five of them, and she narrowly lost the sixth.

“She is all about positivity,” University of Montana women’s tennis head coach Steve Ascher said, “She has an incredible work ethic.”

Mitkova is a true freshman, but she has already won all three of her matches against conference opponents. She has been in Missoula since August of 2020, when Mitkova traveled to the Zoo 4,590 miles from her hometown of London, England.

“It’s cute,” she said about Missoula. “It feels like home.”

She has been a standout for the Griz, full of energy as she bounds across the court. In a recent practice, her teammates took turns hitting the ball at her and watching as Mitkova continued to send them back in their direction.

Before she lived in England, Mitkova was born in Bulgaria. She began playing tennis when her mom told her that she had to get into shape at the age of seven.

Eventually, Mitkova began excelling at tennis and was playing in the English National Club League. In 2019, she

finished fifth overall in the United Kingdom in the club league. In that same year, she also began seeking opportunities in the U.S. and posted a recruitment video that received over 10,000 views.

After calling UM head tennis coach Jason Brown, Mitkova received an offer to play for the Griz. When she looked at a picture of The Oval on UM’s campus, she was sold on becoming a Grizzly and moving to Missoula.

Since her arrival, she has dominated at UM. Her only losses have come to opponents from Gonzaga and Washington State. Mitkova’s play has helped UM bolster a 4-4 record on the year with a 1-1 conference mark.

Perhaps Mitkova’s most dominant performance thus far was against rival Montana State.

“It was cool because everyone did so well,” she said. “It was big, winning against them.”

She beat her opponent in the first match, lost in the second and then cruised to a 6-0 win in the final match. In her doubles match against MSU, Mitkova and her teammate Maria Goheen steamrolled the Cats duo 6-1.

“We just played tough,” said Ascher, the head coach. “We made great decisions that day.”

Mitkova collected her first win of the season against Lewis and Clark State, when she won 6-0 in both matches.

She also beat an opponent from Idaho State before taking down a rival opponent from Montana State.

During UM’s road trip to Portland, Mitkova caught fire, winning against an opponent from the University of Portland and an opponent from Portland State. In those matches, she outscored her opponents 24-12 in four matches.

In the 2021 season, there are two divisions in the Big Sky Conference. The top two teams in each division will advance to the tournament.

Mitkova’s main goal is to make it to the conference tournament this year. Ascher can tell that his team is poised for the tournament.

“They’re hungry,” he said. “They want to win.”

UM’s next games will be against Weber State on March 27. The Big Sky Conference Tournament starts on May 1 in Phoenix.

“I want to keep winning,” Mitkova said. “I would love to get to [the] conference.”



University of Montana freshman Ivayla Mitkova returns a serve from one of her teammates during a women’s tennis team practice session on the courts next to the University Center on March 18. Mitkova was born in Bulgaria but lived most of her life in London, England. During her time in England, Mitkova finished 5th overall in the 2019 English National Club League finals. **ANTONIO IBARRA | MONTANA KAIMIN**

# The NCAA’s treatment of female college athletes is inexcusable

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During one of NCAA’s most profitable events of the entire year, the NCAA basketball tournament, the men’s players received a state-of-the-art weight room filled with racks of dumbbells, plenty of multicolored weighted plates and stations to do a variety of workouts. But for the women’s teams, (and during Womens’ History Month) the NCAA provided players a sad, singular rack of dumbbells and some sanitized yoga mats.

“I felt like it had to be a joke,” said Elizabeth Hubble, the director of the University of Montana’s Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program. “Why would you do that now, when there is so much focus on [the NCAA tournament].”

The University of Montana’s women’s basketball team didn’t make it to the tournament this year, but 68 other teams did. Those 68 teams, full of hard working student athletes, don’t deserve the treatment they are getting in the tournament from the NCAA.

In both the men and women’s brackets, the student athletes are in bubbles where the NCAA provides them with food, practice courts, toiletries and other basic needs. The men’s bubble is based in Indianapolis while the women’s is in San Antonio.

You’ve probably seen some sexist young male post on social media that women’s basketball players don’t get as many resources because they don’t generate as much money. This may be true for professional sports, but when it comes to the NCAA, this thought pattern is wrong and harmful.

The NCAA is required to put forth the same amount of money towards men’s and women’s basketball according to Title IX. Unfortunately, the NCAA doesn’t follow Title IX and give its athletes equal rights because... well... the NCAA is stupid.

Hubble says that universities and organizations are often only required to “show that they are trying to abide by Title IX” and don’t actually have to follow it. In this case, the NCAA didn’t even try to show that it was abiding by Title IX; it ignored it.

When the student athletes arrived in the bubbles after dealing with a long season that involved continuous COVID-19

testing and constant schedule changes and cancellations, they were greeted with gift bags. Posts by the student athletes showed a bad trend.

The men’s basketball players received a blanket, a sweatshirt, a hat, a t-shirt, 16 different hygiene products, a book, a pair of socks, a puzzle and a few more assorted March Madness themed items. The women’s basketball players received a pillowcase, two water bottles, a t-shirt, an umbrella, six hygiene products, a pair of socks, a hat, a scrunchie and a set of playing cards.

While the men had numerous hygiene products and even a full-size wall poster, the women’s basketball players were stuck with a weird variety of semi-useful gifts.

This gift-giving fest by the NCAA seemed as if it was a bad joke, but then the athletes began receiving meals. Basketball players in the bubbles quickly realized that while the men were receiving buffet-style catered meals, the women were getting plastic containers full of unseasoned and borderline inedible meals.

A viral Instagram post showed one meal that a women’s basketball player received — a Salisbury steak that more closely resembled a dog food patty covered in gravy. Women’s basketball players also complained that there were limited vegetarian options, and ordering food was not allowed.

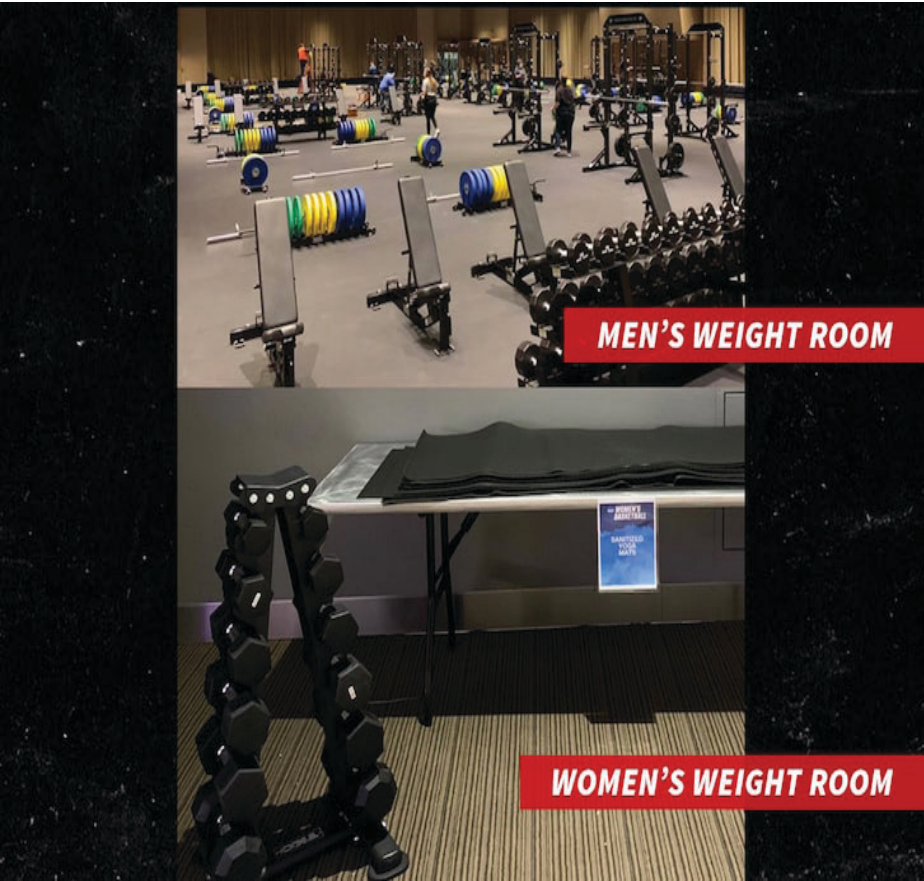
The NCAA did not offer a statement on the food conditions in the bubble, but according to the social media accounts of some players in the bubble, the food quality is improving.

The issue that really brought these bubble injustices to light was the previously mentioned workout areas. The wimpy set of dumbbells given to the best collegiate women’s basketball players received national backlash. But it’s OK, the NCAA vice president of women’s basketball Lynn Holzman came out with a statement.

“This is due to limited space,” part of Holzman’s statement read. “The original plan was to expand the workout area.”

A deserving, but blatantly untrue apology. Pictures posted online after the statement clearly showed empty space in the bubble where a larger workout area could have been built.

A few days later, the NCAA established a suitable weight room for some of our



Social media posts from the players in the men’s and women’s college basketball bubbles seen on TMZ Sports’s website show discrepancies in the equipment available to athletes. Players and coaches also called into question the quality of food and gift bags given to the women’s players compared to the men’s. **CONTRIBUTED**

country’s finest athletes, but it was too late. The NCAA showed blatant misogyny.

“We live in a time where athletes aren’t putting up with it anymore, which I think is a hugely important thing,” Hubble said.

If college athletes aren’t benefiting financially off of this million dollar event, they should at least be treated with respect. Women have battled for years and years to get equal pay, representation and opportunities in sports.

While there has been a professional basketball league for men since the 1940s, the Women’s National Basketball Association wasn’t started until 1996. The United States women’s national team has won four World Cups while the men have never even made it to the finals, yet U.S. women’s players are still advocating for equal pay.

“Hopefully they won’t make this mistake again,” Hubble said.

Hubble says that if you want to support female athletes, there are a variety of things you can do. Going to or watching women’s sports events is a big one, as it adds important money and viewership to women’s athletics. Following women’s athletes on social media can also help benefit them. Hubble also added that if you can, donate money to women’s sports teams.

What the NCAA did this March wasn’t a mistake. It was a continuation of a pattern of disrespect and disregard for women in sports.



# UM volleyball loses at home against Sacramento State

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After starting out hot, the University of Montana volleyball team fell to Sacramento State 3-1 in a match on March 21 at home.

"We're frustrated by our breakdowns, but we also know that we're pushing really good teams and feel like we can take control of sets against those types of teams," UM head coach Allison Lawrence told UM Athletics after the game.

Sacramento State had 27 kills in the match while the Griz only had 20 successful attacks. UM did outperform Sacramento State when it came

to serving the ball, racking up six aces to Sac State's five.

Freshman outside hitter Sophia Meyers led Montana with two service aces. Meyers also led UM in kills when she notched 12 of them. Sophomore outside hitter Amethyst Harper had 12 kills.

The first set was smooth sailing for Montana when it won 25-19. Sacramento State had four service errors in the first set.

In the second set, the momentum flipped and the Griz lost narrowly, 25-21. Sacramento State scored on 25.5% of its attacks while UM was only able to convert on 19% of its attacks.

Redshirt senior middle blocker Pey-

ton Boutwell had a savvy cross court kill in the third set to put Montana up 15-10. Just when it looked like UM would tie the match at 1-1, Sacramento State once again caught momentum and outlasted the Griz 25-20 to take a 2-1 lead.

In the fourth and final set, Sacramento State became the first team to win three sets and win the match when it won 25-23. UM only converted on 9.8% of its hits while Sacramento State had a hitting percentage of 13%. Sacramento State also had six blocks in the final set while UM only had three.

The 1-3 loss notched UM's record back to 2-13. UM's only two wins have come in five set matches.



University of Montana redshirt senior middle blocker Peyton Boutwell, No. 14, jumps and prepares to block a spike from a Sacramento State player at Dahlberg Arena on March 21. Boutwell racked up a total of two solo blocks against Sacramento State. **ANTONIO IBARRA | MONTANA KAIMIN**



University of Montana defensive specialist Sarina Moreno, No. 1, serves the ball against Sacramento State at Dahlberg Arena on March 21. **ANTONIO IBARRA | MONTANA KAIMIN**



University of Montana outside hitter Sophia Meyers, No. 3, leaps into the air to spike the ball against Sacramento State on March 21. UM lost its first game against Sacramento State 3-1. **ANTONIO IBARRA | MONTANA KAIMIN**