

MONTANA KAIMIN

Talking Politics



Amid powerful political division, University of Montana students re-examine what it looks like to express themselves.



Story by Sabrina Philip
Photos by Montana Kaimin



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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."

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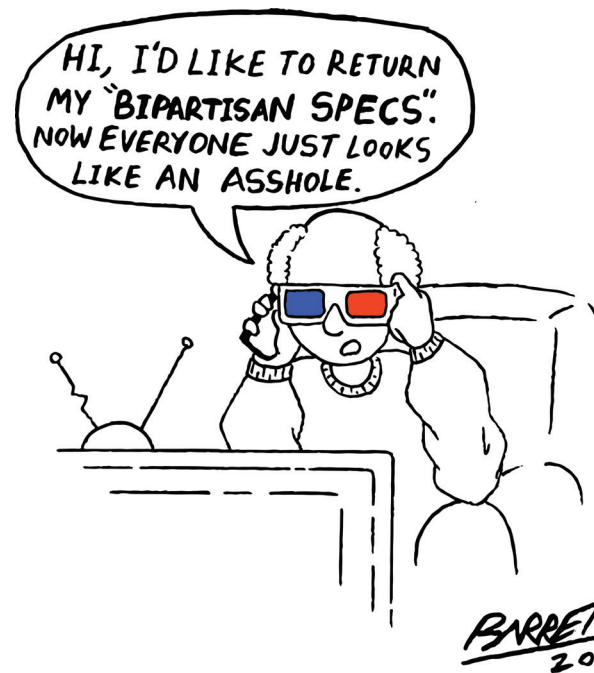
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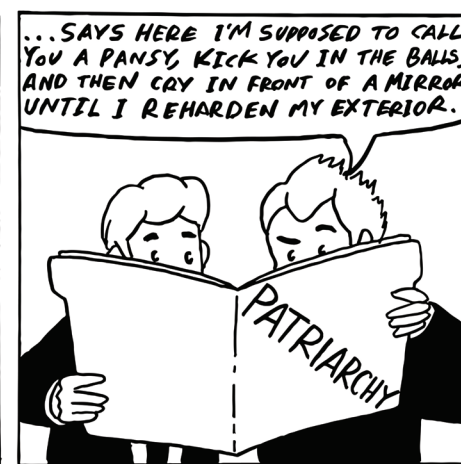
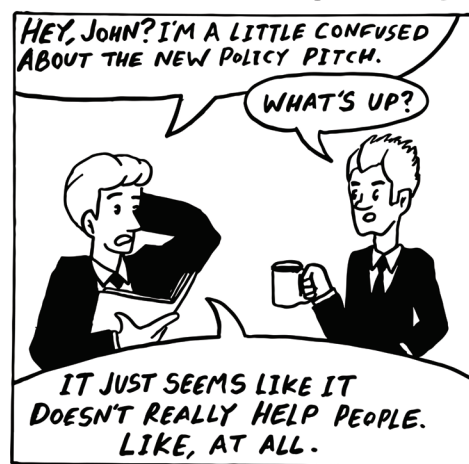
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POLITICAL CARTOON



KAIMIN KOMICS: SE 3 EP 6



The never-ending revolving door of the transfer portal

In recent years, college sports teams across the U.S. have seen a rise in the athlete transfer portal becoming more like a revolving door, and the University of Montana is no exception.

The transfer portal allows collegiate athletes to move across universities and divisional programs freely. All players have to do is declare that they want to test the waters of the portal and they can either be picked up by a team or decide to withdraw their name to stay with their current school.

Originally, there were rules in place to help protect schools and focus on athletes' academics. However, in 2024, the NCAA decided to rescind the restrictions on the amount of times a player could enter the portal and complete a transfer.

Before the change, any player that made more than one transfer would have to apply for a waiver or sit out for the season. This rule was in place in order to discourage players from transferring each season and encourage them to stick with one team. But without this rule, players can move whenever and wherever they want.

UM athletics has seen some incredible players wear maroon and silver across all sports with the help of the transfer portal. Kai Johnson a guard from Western Washington, to Austin Patterson, another guard from Sacramento State, both came to UM through the transfer portal. They both helped Griz

basketball to its first NCAA March Madness tournament since 2019.

The Griz also have the transfer portal to thank for the arrival of Griz football wide receiver, Michael Wortham, from Eastern Washington, who currently has 11 touchdowns for the Griz, playing a major role in the team's 10-0 record on the season.

But while the transfer portal allows players to seek better and brighter chances at another school, it also causes uncertainty for coaches and teams.

With the cut back on the transfer rule, a record number of players entered the portal. In 2025, the College Football Network reported over 3,300 football players entered the portal in just two days.

All of this switching among schools creates a major problem for the Griz, most importantly the loss of its football players to transfers.

For the past two seasons, two of the Grizzlies' starting quarterbacks left Montana through the transfer portal.

Clifton McDowell joined UM after transferring from Central Arkansas for the 2023 season. McDowell played in all 15 games for the Griz, gaining 22 touchdowns. He eventually helped the Griz to the national championship game in Frisco, Texas.

McDowell is an example of players playing for one team and then moving to a completely different one.

While Keali'i Ah Yat is the top quarterback for the Griz, he's still a little inexperienced. Last year he was considered to be the second string quarterback. Though Ah Yat has shown this season that he has the potential for a future National Football League draft, he needs to have someone behind him, and McDowell could've been that person.

But just as the return to Montana was picking back up, McDowell decided to join McNeese State, his sixth team in six years, where he plays as the team's third string quarterback, a major downgrade from his position at Montana.

Logan Fife arrived to the Griz after making the move from the Mountain West team Fresno State. However, after having to share the spotlight with Ah Yat, Fife decided to play for the New Mexico State Aggies.

The transfer portal can be used for good, but it can also quickly get out of hand.

The portal makes it harder for smaller universities like Montana to keep big name athletes. Once a player gets their second of fame that comes along with getting a clip on ESPN or making an appearance at a national tournament, they can decide to leave in order to join a bigger school.

UM, while we've had our moments of national attention, is still a small school.

Compared to other schools like Boise State and Oregon, the University of Montana

is a no name. No one had heard the names of Montana greats Junior Bergen or Eli Gillman until the Griz's push to the national title.

When we made our push to March Madness with men's basketball earlier this year, I watched countless shows to try and fix my bracket, and no one had any faith in Montana, they barely even mentioned us.

Our athletes know that if they make a transfer to a bigger school in a more attention-gaining conference, then they can get their name out there, pushing a better case for the draft or gaining attention from teams across the ocean.

This will cause Montana to lose some of its best players to the portal all because they would rather sit on the bench at a bigger school than make a highlight reel at UM. Losing that level of talent will keep the Griz at this mid level where we're just alright.

Sure, we may win titles and play in some major tournament games, but unless we can keep the major talents that come through our doors, we have to settle for an okay team.

The transfer portal was a great idea. It allows athletes to dictate their collegiate experience. However, it needs to have some relegations, something to give smaller schools a seat at the table and that stops undermining them.

- Hannah Benitez, sports editor

Like it? Hate it? Let us know.
Email us your opinions at
elle.daniel@umontana.edu.

Top 10 play



Redshirt sophomore Korbin Hendrix makes a one-handed catch for a touchdown against Eastern Washington on Nov. 8. The catch was later highlighted on ESPN SportsCenter's Top 10 plays.

JACKSON MAILEY | MONTANA KAIMIN

SUDOKU

Edited by Margie E. Burke

Difficulty: Medium

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

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:

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

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In local news...

SAV CHAVEZ | NEWS EDITOR
savannah.chavez@umontana.edu

MONTANA AIRPORTS PREPARE FOR TRAFFIC DISRUPTION

The airports in Montana are bracing for potential delays and cancellations after the Federal Aviation Administration announced cutbacks on flights during the government shutdown.

"It is unknown if the projected cancellations will affect flights out of MSO," Missoula Airport Director Brian Ellestad told the Missoula Current. "We're entering into a lot of unknowns at the moment."

Department of Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy announced last week he plans to reduce 10% of flight capacity from 40 major airports across the country, accounting for around 3,300 cancellations, according to the Missoulian.

While there are no airports in Montana on the list, airports that provide connections through Montana are impacted, including Portland, Salt Lake City, Denver and Seattle, among others.

"What we have been telling our customers is that if they are affected, they will be contacted directly by the airline for rebooking options," Ellestad said.

The shutdown halted pay for Federal Aviation Administration air traffic controllers and Transportation Security Administration employees, who were required to work without pay.

According to the Missoulian, Duffy said the reduction of capacity is meant to maintain safety levels as fewer air traffic controllers have appeared for work.

"This is not based on what airline has more flights out of what location. This is about where is the pressure and how do we alleviate the pressure," Duffy said at a press conference.

According to the Missoulian, Duffy confirmed at the press conference the number of daily flight cancellations could reach 4,000 once the 10% capacity reduction is made, but said the restrictions could go into effect incrementally as needed.

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA WESTERN FOUNDATION RECEIVES HISTORIC DONATION

The University of Montana Western Foundation received the historic Andrus Hotel as a gift from John Micha and his wife, Vicki.

Foundation leaders said the donation will preserve the hotel's place as a landmark

in downtown Dillon while creating new opportunities for students, according to NBC Montana.

"This remarkable gift ensures that the Andrus remains both a thriving local business and a lasting part of Dillon's rich heritage," Chair of the Montana Western Foundation Board of Directors, Phill Willett, said in a press release.

University officials said no state or institutional funds will be used for hotel operations or maintenance, and the foundation and its partner will cover all associated costs.

The hotel, named after renowned sheep rancher Harry Andrus, was developed after the rancher noticed the town's one hotel "deteriorating in service," according to the Historic Hotels of America website. The hotel has been a member of Historic Hotels of America since 2021.

"Thanks to the generosity and forward thinking of Dr. Micha, the future of the Andrus Hotel will continue to be an important part of our community," Willett said.



On this week's Kaimin Cast, Misophonia: More than meets the ear

People chewing, pens clicking, and lips smacking — most people would probably say that these sounds are annoying. But when these sounds become more than just an auditory annoyance, it can become a syndrome known as misophonia.

Having only been named in 2001, misophonia is far from a well-understood condition. Recent research suggests that it might not be sounds at all that trigger misophonia, Shadee Hardy, a misophonia-specializing psychotherapist based out of Portland, Oregon, said in a Zoom interview.

Hardy said, "The latest research about the mirror neurons and the role of the motor cortex in this syndrome is the suggestion that misophonia isn't actually about the sounds. For somebody who has misophonia, it feels like it's really sound-based. I actually have misophonia myself as well as treating it. And that's even a surprise to me. Sometimes it feels like it is the sounds, but what I know from my personal experience is that it isn't necessarily just about the sounds, but about how I'm perceiving the sounds."

Find out more about misophonia in Misophonia: More than meets the ear, by heading to our website at montanakaimin.com.

-Weston Fudge, audio reporter



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



TRUMP ADMINISTRATION RENEWS APPEAL TO KEEP SNAP PAYMENTS FROZEN

It has been over two weeks since the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program's federal food aid was supposed to go out to 41 million people across the nation, and after several confusing updates, President Donald Trump's administration returned to the Supreme Court on Monday, pushing to keep the aid program frozen while the government is shut down.

Lower courts have ruled that the government must keep full payments flowing and the Supreme Court asked the administration to respond after an appeals court ruled against it again late Sunday, according to The Associated Press.

States administering SNAP payments face uncertainty on whether they can provide full monthly benefits amid the legal battle.

The Trump Administration over the weekend demanded that states "undo" full benefits that were paid during a one-day window after a federal judge ordered full funding and before Supreme Court justice Ketanji Brown Jackson paused that order, AP News reported.

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE DECISION WILL NOT BE REVISITED

The Supreme Court turned down a request that it consider overturning its landmark 2015 decision to legalize same-sex marriage.

The court declined the petition on Monday, which was filed by Kim Davis, a former Kentucky county clerk.

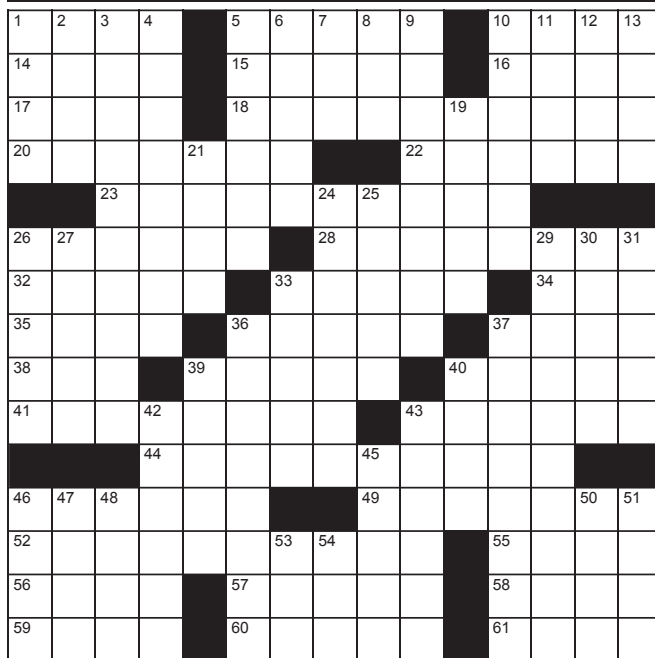
Davis asked the Supreme Court to reverse an order that required her to pay more than \$300,000 to a couple denied a marriage license due to her religious beliefs and to overturn the same-sex marriage ruling, according to The New York Times.

Mathew Staver, a lawyer for Davis, said the Obergefell opinion was "egregiously wrong from the start" and said his organization, Liberty Counsel, would continue to work to reverse it.

"It is not a matter of if, but when the Supreme Court will overturn Obergefell," he said in a statement.

The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke



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ACROSS

- 1 Entry permit
5 Ming things
10 Comic-strip possum
14 Border upon
15 Insect stage
16 "Argo" setting
17 Faction
18 Disguise
20 Doesn't include
22 Orchestral section
23 Recruiter's objective
26 Solomon's strength
28 In truth
32 Atlas enlargement
33 Narnia's creator
34 Fish delicacy
35 Lumber along
36 "Bet you can't!" taunter
37 Twelve Oaks neighbor
38 Bud holder?
39 ____ City:
Detroit nickname
40 Busy places
41 Not localized, as a problem
43 Patio material
44 Smelly pranks
46 Fillion or Lane
49 Attributed
52 Thrill
55 Drug bust qty.
56 Salty drop
57 Emphatic refusal
58 Lab procedure
59 List anagram
60 Levels

- 61 Brings into play

DOWN

- 1 Hyacinth holder
2 Mountain goat
3 Those who follow
4 Showed up for
5 "Law & Order" extra, maybe
6 Accumulate
7 Elliott or Neill
8 Freudian topic
9 Tourist shop offering
10 Southwest workers
11 Spoon-administered
12 Smitten
13 Snake eyes
19 Parking penalties
21 Novel idea
24 Dwayne Johnson, familiarly

- 25 Yard machine
26 Diaper bag supply
27 Mosaic technique
29 Ludicrous distortions
30 Sophia of "Two Women"
31 Baker's need
33 Classical tongue
36 Like some traits
37 Far-off place, figuratively
39 Nickel or steel
40 Rope fiber
42 Concert memento
43 Rising stars
45 Dog to avoid
46 Trawling items
47 Skater's jump
48 Bangkok native
50 If all ____ fails...
51 Specks
53 Camping gear chain
54 Caesar's hello

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

Vegas-scope

AIDAN GRAHAM | NEWS REPORTER

aidan.graham@umontana.edu

As winter creeps in, it's easy to crave the heat here and there. Whether it be the hot sun or a hot streak, many snowbirds are craving a trip down south. However, if you're thinking of making your way to the Las Vegas Strip, think again. Here's how your trip would go:

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21):

Scorpio, not dumb enough to gamble and too classy to party, you came to Vegas to take the city for everything it's worth. With a network of friends and experts, you heisted and double crossed your way to riches, but now the feds are on your tail. Watch your back Scorpio, it's a dog-eat-dog world out there.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21):

Sagittarius, your Vegas vacation turned into work real fast. Picked up by the mob for your boss bitch tendencies and put in charge of a casino, you took the chance to truly whip it all into shape. But running the mob is harder than it looks, and everyone wants a piece of your pie. Your friends at home wonder why you never came back. Maybe because you're living the high life? Or maybe it's because your six feet under in a cornfield? Who's to say.

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19): Capricorn, you've really got some balls. Unlike Scorpio, you're dumb enough to gamble, but somehow smart enough to win? You spent your trip counting cards and narrowly avoiding pit bosses, hitting and quitting each table and taking the dealers for all they're worth. Quit while you're ahead, Capricorn. The house always wins, and it's only a matter of time.

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18): Aquarius, your tendency to be stuck in the past really came back to bite you on this trip. You're a fish out of water in the city of sin, but you're no stranger to a little sinning. Danger is your middle name. You weren't just there for the groovy chicks, you were there to save the world. Instead of seeing the sights, you were climbing through vents, running from barreling steam rollers and getting hit by flying shoes. In the end, Aquarius, you really rose to the challenge, adapted to a mysterious new world and learned that change isn't a bad thing in the end. SHAGADELLIC, BABY! YEAH!

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20): Pisces, you never even made it to the strip. After a wrong turn on Route 93, you found yourself out of gas in a rough-and-tumble desert town. Instead of asking for directions, your incessant need to fit in had you claiming to be a gunslinging folk hero. By the time your friends found you, you'd not only saved the town, but discovered a sense of honor and courage you'd never known you had. It was always in you, Pisces. Great shootin' partner!

ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19): This was supposed to be a normal trip to Vegas, just a night with your best pals, living it up on the strip. But your impulsive nature got the best of you. Now it's the next morning, there's a ring on your finger, a tiger in your bed, your friends are missing and WHOSE BABY IS THAT!? Now you have to uncover your drunken mistakes as the consequences of your actions come back to bite you one by one.

TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20) Taurus, your trip to Vegas was testament to your need for escape, and what better a way to do it than at the Lotus Hotel?

You gave yourself a well-deserved break, indulging in all the hedonistic pleasures the hotel has to offer. You really did leave your worries behind, but what was it you needed to remember in the first place? Does it really matter? This is exactly where you need to be.

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20): Gemini, you decided to make the most of your trip in Vegas, but that's not necessarily a good thing. Instead of gambling, you

found yourself in Bat Country chasing that white rabbit down the strip in a rented convertible, hopped up on uppers, downers, laughs and screamers. You may not have left with any winnings, but hopefully a new perspective, that is, if you remember any of it.

CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22): Cancer, you're so money and you don't even know it! Just like swingers, you were dragged along by your player friends and on the run from your past. Your trip didn't involve winning big, but rather finding something much better: yourself. Through friendship and new love, you left Sin City changed for the better, a reminder, Cancer, you can always take a chance on love. That's Vegas, baby!

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22): Leo, you're the underdog. You're not in Vegas for the glittering lights, you're here for one purpose and one purpose only: Dodgeball. During your trip, you whipped your team into shape for the national dodgeball tournament, and thanks to your leadership and a team with a heart of gold, you walked away with a load of cash earned fair and square.

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 22): You came to get away from it all, yet here you are trying to save a stranger you just met today. All you were left with was a broken heart and a wasted trip. No one finds love in Vegas, so please take this as a lesson, learn some self respect and learn to love yourself instead.

LIBRA (SEP. 23-OCT. 22): Libra, your need for justice really changed the trajectory of your trip. When a gang of thugs took over your Vegas hotel, you had no choice to go full "Die Hard." However, your fear of conflict really left you more of a Paul Blart. Even so, through your bumbling antics you saved the day, proving anyone can be a hero!



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

Kratom cases rise in Montana amid lack of information and regulation

COLBY SUKO-CLARK | NEWS REPORTER
colby.suko-clark@umontana.edu

As knowledge of its effects remains limited, kratom-related DUIs and overdoses in Montana continue to increase, leading doctors and legislators searching for a way to battle the drug's lack of regulation.

Kratom, also known as mitragynine, is an opiate primarily used for pain relief, but there is currently no regulation in Montana on it, making it legal for anyone over 18 years old to use the substance.

In many cases, users don't know that kratom is classified as an opiate, contributing to a rise in cases, crimes and overdoses. According to toxicology reports for 2024, kratom was the third highest number of single drug overdose with four confirmed cases. Since 2020, there have been 29 deaths attributed to the substance. The only drugs ahead of kratom are methamphetamines and fentanyl.

The primary form of consumption for the drug is to mix it into a drink. Most of the effects are unknown, since it is a relatively new product. However, it has stimulant effects in low doses, but in high doses can act like an opioid.

Driving under the influence of kratom has become more common in Montana. Law enforcement agencies have kept records on kratom-related incidents over the past five years. Most of these cases involve impaired driving. Across the state, toxicology reports show 72 confirmed DUI cases involving kratom, 42 from this year.

Kratom's overall prevalence is increasing. Matt Stonesifer, patrol captain for the Missoula Police Department, stated there has been growth of shops carrying the substance, as well as an increase in products containing kratom.

Doctors are also seeing more cases. "Kratom has become a word said more and more," said Dr. Chris Baumert, medical director of RiverStone Health Clinic in Billings. Billings has seen the most cases of overdose and kratom related issues in general.

Kratom remains a controversial substance in the United States. The substance is banned in Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Rhode Island, Wisconsin and Vermont, while Wyoming has imposed age restrictions, requiring buyers to be at least 21 years old.

Montana, however, has no such restrictions, allowing any adult to purchase kratom from

local vendors, including high schoolers who have recently turned 18 years old.

Unlike some cannabis and nicotine products, kratom is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

Some individuals first start using kratom because of a separate addiction. The users may turn to kratom as a way to stop tusing other substances without quitting cold turkey.

"I was addicted to pain opioids. I used kratom to take the edge off," said Braden Clark, a former user. However, he said the switch led to a new addiction to kratom.

"It was just a substitute for another addiction," he said. "It's nasty. I would not recommend it to anyone."

Because kratom is an opiate, withdrawal symptoms can occur when users try to quit. Baumert stated patients going through kratom withdrawal may have similar symptoms to opioid withdrawal, including nausea, diarrhea and anxiety.

RiverStone Health is now working to implement better screening for kratom after struggling to identify this kind of withdrawal.

"A lot of people don't understand what kratom is," Baumert said. RiverStone's website features a page dedicated to educating the public about drug effects, now including kratom.

Dr. Jeff Adams, medical director of the Curry Health Center at the University of Montana, echoed the concern.

"From a public health and precautionary viewpoint, the lack of local data means that vigilance is warranted: awareness campaigns, conversations with youth and monitoring of local retail availability might be useful," Adams stated in an email.

To address the growing crisis, doctors are focusing on two main solutions. "One is to battle the lack of information," Baumert said, emphasizing the need for public education.

The other involves policy changes. The Blackfeet tribe banned kratom in September due to overdose concerns. While there is ongoing discussion about raising the legal purchase age to 21 statewide, nothing has passed.

Lyle Rutherford, a tribal council member for the Blackfeet, told the Montana Free Press, "The main component is we just don't want any of these forthcoming issues back on our plate. Because if you look at Indian Country, or if you look across the nation, we have a nationwide issue when it comes to opiates." However, the



A selection of kratom products for sale at a Missoula smoke shop on Nov. 8.

TORI KUEHL | MONTANA KAIMIN

effects have not been reported if the tribe has seen a decrease in cases or overdoses in the following months since the ban.

Despite the risks, kratom has gained popularity among some groups. "It has fad properties in society," Baumert said.

People have been comparing kratom to kava, another drug that is organically based. However, kava is a depressant and is FDA-approved, while kratom has stimulant properties at low doses and is classified by the Drug Enforcement Administration as a drug of concern.

As Montana continues to see an increase in DUI cases and overdoses, solutions are being discussed at the state level with House Bill 407.

The Kratom Consumer Protection Act, which would have forced establishments to register for the ability to sell kratom, was shot down in May.

This has led to many people running campaigns against Kratom. One of them is run by RiverStone Health. The idea behind this campaign is to understand all the effects that kratom has on the body, since it is mostly a mystery.

"We don't know what we don't know," Baumert said.

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scan here to learn more:

Local health care adopts new recommendations for COVID-19 vaccines

ELLE DANIEL | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
elle.daniel@umontana.edu

As holiday travel plans approach and temperatures drop, Montanans are more at risk for catching illnesses like the flu, the common cold or COVID-19.

While the flu typically has a period of time when it's most viral, healthcare workers in Missoula said they've seen COVID's longevity stretch year round. With the disease still prevalent and the wider national discussion on vaccines still ongoing, the question remains: How should the general public protect themselves, and who should be making an appointment to get vaccinated? The answer is more complex — and politicized — than some might think.

In 2025, vaccine recommendations from the Center for Disease Control changed after health secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. appointed a new advisory board to re-examine vaccine guidelines and schedules. Along with these new recommendations, the center states anyone between the ages of 6 months and 64 should be screened for underlying healthcare conditions like diabetes or having a compromised immune system before being vaccinated.

The new recommendations, health care workers said, created confusion and conflict within medical institutions. Nine former leaders of the Center for Disease Control wrote an open letter accusing Kennedy of endangering the health of Americans.

When it comes to COVID-19's year-round prevalence, Curry Health Center Pharmacy Manager Kenneth Chatriand said COVID isn't necessarily as fatal as it once was.

"That doesn't mean that you can't still die or that you can't pass it to another person that can get really sick as well," Chatriand said.

Missoula's seen several COVID spikes in the past few months, including a significant spike in July and another in September. The latest strain is named LP 8.1, and comes with its own distinct symptoms including a "razor blade-like" sore throat and head congestion.

"We're starting to see an upward climb with that one right now," Chatriand said.

There are steps to protect people from COVID, and the best, Chatriand said, is by

getting vaccinated against it. In addition, Chatriand said the current COVID vaccine is roughly 80% effective in preventing serious illness.

Whether or not to vaccinate has long been a debate in America. According to a 2023 Pew Research Center report, 21% of Americans had sworn off vaccines altogether, and another 36% believed the risks of being vaccinated outweigh the benefits. Twenty-four percent of Americans from the age of 18 to 29 were not vaccinated against COVID-19 at all.

Curry isn't the only place available for college students and Missoulians to get vaccinated. Missoula Public Health received its COVID-19 booster shots later in the year than normal. The organization and clinic started offering them Oct. 14 when they arrived, rather than earlier in September when the medicine usually comes in.

Sara Heineman, the health services director for Missoula Public Health, said they'd had "a bit of a chaotic start to the season" due to the new guidelines set by the Center for Disease Control.

"The recommendations were a little confusing on who should get them," Heineman said. The release of these guidelines allowed newly formulated vaccines to be shipped out and for health care providers to start giving them to children under the age of 18.

But Missoula Public Health wasn't the only group experiencing a rocky start to vaccination season. Chatriand said he and the Curry Health Center worked together to expand access to vaccines. Otherwise, following the CDC's official recommendations, Curry would potentially turn away patients because they didn't have an underlying condition.

Chatriand said the CDC's recommendations did not feel like it was protecting the public — particularly the guideline that anyone between the ages of 6 months to 64 without an underlying condition does not need to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

"I don't believe in that one because I feel like if somebody wants to protect themselves from COVID-19, they should have their right and privilege to do that, as well as protect people around them," Chatriand said.

Getting vaccinated is something Chatriand believes anyone can do not just for themselves, but their friends, family and anyone else they might come into contact with.

"Maybe we have students that work in a nursing home," Chatriand said. "Maybe we have students that are health care workers also not recommended to get it that are nursing sick patients all the time. Do they want to protect their families? There are other reasons to get a vaccine than just yourself."

Expanding that access involved turning to the recommendations of other medical groups, including creating a collaborative practice agreement with the physicians at Curry to offer vaccines without screening for underlying conditions first. Chatriand and the Curry Health Center turned to recommendations set by the American Academy of Pediatrics and multiple cancer institutes.

"If you want the COVID-19 vaccine, we're not going to put any restrictions on receiving that vaccine. We want to make it accessible and a nonjudgemental form as well. We just want to be able to give it," he said.

Chatriand said it took some maneuvering to readjust to new guidelines. "With it being politicized, it's hard to know what we need to do," he said. "As a pharmacist, I want to make sure I'm protecting people, but I also have to do so within my guidelines and be lawful."

As of Nov. 4, Chatriand said Curry has administered over 1,400 COVID-19 vaccines. Students and University of Montana faculty and staff can walk into Curry at any time for a vaccine, and rather than undergoing a prior health screening, they're given two laminated forms of the risks and benefits, along with a short form to fill out.

Additionally, the Missoula Public Health organization is also hosting off-site events to get people vaccinated against COVID and the flu. Heineman said there's been a lot of interest in getting vaccinated against COVID. "We've had good turnout at off-site clinics," she said.

Missoula Public Health is following guidelines that anyone six months or older should get vaccinated. She added that anyone interested should talk to their health care provider about the risks and benefits of getting vaccinated.

COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

- Severe sore throat
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Cough, congestion

WHERE TO GET VACCINATED

- Walgreens
- CVS
- Curry Health Center (for UM students, faculty and staff)
- Providence and Missoula Public Health Clinic

"It really isn't anything different," she said. Chatriand recognized that some students put off getting their COVID and flu shots so they don't experience post-vaccination symptoms during important tests or plans. Both he and Heineman said now is the time to get the vaccine, before traveling for the holidays and before people start gathering inside more often.

"This is a great time to get that COVID vaccine so it has time to develop," Heineman said. It's a sentiment similar to Chatriand's.

"Just take a 10-minute break," Chatriand said, in reference to Curry's walk-in vaccine availability. "I would love for [students] to save their sick days for going skiing or having fun, and we would love to help them out."

Talking Politics



Montana climate activist Lander Busse speaks to demonstrators outside of Main Hall on Nov. 7. **HENRY DOELLINGER | MONTANA KAIMIN**

"Cheer if you hate Trump," Lander Busse said as he started his speech at the Climate Response Club's climate change rally earlier this month on the University of Montana Oval. Students around him waved homemade signs, chanted and helped register others to vote.

At a bipartisan panel on political violence a few hours later at the University Center, conservative Trey Kinamon, the president of UM's Turning Point USA and a sophomore, called the death of conservative activist Charlie Kirk a "moment in history" and called on students to reject radicalism "on both sides."

More than 10 months after Trump entered office for his second term, the

Nov. 7 rally and bipartisan panel were public displays of obvious frustration over the current state of politics and the government on both sides.

Liberals on campus say they're frustrated when their attempts to reach out to conservatives fall flat.

"I try to bridge gaps with folks through areas like environmentalism and conservation and hunting," Busse said. "The bottom line is that there is one source of destruction in this country right now, and it is at the hands of the Republican Party."

Conservatives say they're willing to share their views, but still feel stigmatized by their beliefs on a left-leaning campus.

When people hear he is a Republican, Kinamon said, "They shut you off rather

than actually asking you about your values."

Kinamon said he's felt as if there's been a shift away from acceptance on all sides. "Especially when a lot of professors here have had a past being engaged in democratic ideas, events or whatever it may be. I just hope we grow more toward being bipartisan," he said.

University President Seth Bodnar said that a polarized campus needs dialogue to protect the beliefs of every student, no matter how they think.

"Our students are engaged and I think you see evidence of that," Bodnar said. "I see our students expressing their political beliefs across the ideological spectrum, and I think that's a good thing. We have to be a place that not only protects that, but

encourages that and encourages students to be open to new ideas."

On campus, students said they agree that the political divide is deep and intimidating, but that communication and avoidance of online information is key to bridging the political gap.

Noah Roberts, a third-year moderate, conservative-leaning student from Polson studying criminology, said the media and a general lack of respect for other people's opinions are both contributing factors in the growing political divide on campuses.

Kyle Bokota, a left-leaning first-year graduate student studying political science from Crown Point, Indiana, said the widespread internet addiction and social media algorithms can be a source for division.

Story by Sabrina Philip Photos by Montana Kaimin



Amid powerful political division, University of Montana students re-examine what it looks like to express themselves

Rylin Wilde, the vice president of College Democrats of UM, blamed lack of voter access and a lack of ranked-choice voting in Montana for polarization.

No matter the reason, students on both sides of the divide have readjusted to sharing — or hiding — their opinions.

GOSPLAY ON CAMPUS

Many students said they generally feel safe on campus. Roberts noted that Kirk's death was definitely a bit "nerve-racking."

Other students said while they might not be as willing to share their political views in a public setting, they are not worried about their safety.

Still, conservative students said they are less willing to share and "cosplay," or pretend they associate with beliefs

different from theirs to be more accepted in a classroom setting.

"I found good middle ground," Roberts said, referencing a class in which he felt persuaded to camouflage his views. "I try to stay out of that."

Roberts said he felt a need to hide his views because of The University of Montana's reputation as a liberal campus, which he feels is common among conservatives in the nation's university system. He said his goal of getting a good grade left him wanting to "not feel stigmatized," driving him to lean more left on some of his papers last year — although professors reject the notion they would punish a student for conservative views.

Bodnar said school policies promote academic freedom and free speech. "Everyone in the University of Montana community has to be supported and feel free to express their opinions and their ideas without threats of intimidation or without violence," he said.

Spencer Bock, a sophomore from Malibu, California, studying history, said he identifies as a right-leaning libertarian. He said that while he has not experienced the need to disguise his political beliefs at UM, it was such an issue in high school that he needed to speak with his district board and write a complaint to handle it. He believes it will not be an issue for him in the history department due to professors being supportive of dialogue and regulating classroom debates before it gets too heated between students.

Kinamon, a sophomore studying political science and communication studies, said that while he felt a need to cloak his beliefs slightly during his first semester, his perspective soon changed.

"I'm overpaying for school, and at the end of the day, my material should not be graded on what I believe and should be graded on what the rubric actually says," Kinamon said. "I stopped caring. If my professor wants to give me a bad grade because of how I feel about politics, I'll take it up with that professor."

Even Bokota, who leans more to the left, said he thinks changing political beliefs is "something we all do," not just politically, but in all different ways. He said the choice to hide one's political beliefs should make an individual question themselves and their perspectives.

"Firstly, why do you feel the need to kind of hide your positions?" Bokota said. "Is it just because you're kind of shy and more introverted and you're a little bit nervous about the possibility of being confronted? I think that is very normal, and a lot of people fall into that category."

Bokota said it's important to make the distinction between if a person's beliefs are something they are "willing to risk ostracization" for, or just something that is "half-baked."

"If it's because you kind of internally know that what you're saying is deeply problematic, flawed or lacks humanity, and you're afraid of people finding out that part of yourself, then it's probably best that you re-examine that part of yourself," Bokota said. "I think that one of the measures that we can use to kind of discern who we are as people is if you're capable of putting

yourself out there and standing up for something you believe in."

RELUCTANCY IN THE CLASSROOM

Robert Saldin, a professor in UM's political science department and the director of ethics and public affairs at the Mansfield Center, said it's not hard to understand concerns from students who hide their beliefs.

"I'm just sympathetic to that concern, and I don't know if there's a super easy answer," Saldin said. "Part of me would like to just say 'Don't be silly, don't worry about that.' But I do think that it's not crazy that people worry."

Saldin said that while it is hard to advise students who feel a need to hide their beliefs, he can try to create an environment in his classroom where this worry is minimized.

Political science professor Paul Haber said this is an issue he has observed in the classroom as well, and one that he advises against through his methods of instruction.



Sophomore Trey Kinamon, president of the University of Montana's Turning Point USA chapter, poses on Nov. 6.

LEO SPERRY | MONTANA KAIMIN



Robert Saldin, a professor in the political science department, listens to his students discuss political climate in America at the Davidson Honors College on Nov. 4.

JACKSON MAILEY | MONTANA KAIMIN

"I guess I can't say with certainty what other faculty members do in terms of grading through an ideological matrix. I know I experienced this problem in my classes, and as I tell my students, the very best way to get an A in the class is to argue

due to his more liberal views. In this sense, his daughter said he is "unfair to the liberals in the class" because he grades them tougher.

Yet, what Haber and Saldin both identified as an issue is a reluctance from

VOTING AND VOTING SYSTEMS

According to Wilde, the vice president of UM's College Democrats, polarization in the United States could be caused by a low voter turnout. Increasing voter involvement is one particular initiative of

unnecessary. He continues to say that the unseriousness of politicians suggests the need for more qualified candidates.

"It almost goes without saying, but our politicians, they behave kind of like infants," Bokota said. "It's very

"The students today are more reluctant to talk about controversial issues in the classroom than at any time in my 35 years of teaching. We're at the low point, at least in my experience at UM." –Paul Haber

smartly against me," Haber said.

Haber provided examples of this argument by explaining a conversation with his daughter. He said for years he has been teased for being unfair to liberal students since the best way to argue with him is from a conservative point of view

students in the classroom to have political and civil discussions while sharing their viewpoints.

"It's kind of absurd that I'm the most controversial person in the class. That's a very far cry from when I went to school. I see this as really a depressing trend that people are working to transcend," Haber said.

Students, Haber said, are more reluctant than ever to speak up in class.

"Students today are more reluctant to talk about controversial issues in the classroom than at any time in my 35 years of teaching," Haber said. "We're at the low point, at least in my experience at UM."

Haber said that this makes it difficult to discuss controversial issues in the classroom, creating a counterproductive learning environment. He noted a particular reluctance among conservative students to share their views, and attributed this to a culture of deeply divided political parties and ideologies, which makes the University's tasks and responsibilities more difficult.

Saldin also said that while he does what he can to create an environment open to all views in the classroom, it's a problem most universities are facing.

"There are lots of studies out there showing that students worry about voicing their opinions in class, especially conservative students, because they perceive that the climate in the classroom is not open to their perspectives," Saldin said. "I am concerned that universities in general have become more political. There's less room for debate and discussion than there used to be, and that's just a challenge we face right now."

the College Democrats of Montana.

"So few people are voting even in presidential elections," Wilde said.

"We're having such a small part of our population make the biggest decision for us, and nobody's happy for the person. Everybody's pissed off, and no candidate gets over 50% support because nobody likes them and nobody's voting for them. The only way to change that is to get more students to vote. However that happens, we're happy. We (College Democrats of Montana) do voter registration, and we will register anybody."

Wilde also cited ranked-choice voting, a system in which voters rank candidates in order of preference, as less polarizing than winner-take-all outcomes.

Yet, according to Wilde, the increase in partisan politics is not on society's shoulders, but on those in power who support systems to keep them in power longer.

OFFLINE UNDERSTANDING

According to Bokota, the internet and society's widespread addiction to it is a leading factor in polarization. To fix this, Bokota suggests putting down the electronics and internet algorithms, and getting outside to socialize.

"[Algorithms] serve to create a false perception of what the world is really like, what reality really looks like," Bokota said. "Therefore, to fix it, I would encourage people to just kind of, like, touch grass as much as you can. I think getting outside, walking and talking."

Bokota said a lack of social interaction in today's society is because "people are more fearful of other people than they think they should be," which he thinks is

embarrassing to listen to any of them talk because you're confronted with the fact that they really are not qualified for those positions, the vast majority of them. They make the problem much worse, and ideally, you want very wise people to be running the country and when you have the opposite of that, you end up with what we have now, which is an unserious country."

Bock suggested the solution to fixing intense generalizations of beliefs and intense disagreements is to stop the demonization of political opponents. He said this problem creates division and a lack of widespread conversation.

"When somebody says I'm a Republican or I'm a Democrat, the first thought that goes through a lot of people's heads is, 'I'm dealing with a moron, let me ignore everything that they're going to say,'" Bock said. "That's not true."

According to Kinamon, clubs on campus, such as Turning Point USA, provide a space for civil dialogue, creating a safe environment for students to share their concerns and beliefs with peers who share similar views. In stressing the importance of the club being a safe place, members should be able to share their beliefs.

Kinamon believes that campus is a place students should not be worried about expressing their values and political perspectives.

Yet, outside of more partisan clubs on campus, bipartisan clubs on campus also present an opportunity for students to engage in politics and have civil dialogue in a respectful way. These organizations include the Montana Public Interest Research Group (MontPIRG) and BridgeUM.



Rylin Wilde, left, Jonas Jontow, middle, and Zoey Aller, right, pose by a window in the University Center on Nov. 6. Jontow is the College Democrats of Montana president and Wilde is the club's vice president.

LEO SPERRY | MONTANA KAIMIN

“Not everything, not all change, has to be through the Republican Party or the Democratic Party,” said Tess Rosbarsky, a Missoula senior studying political science. Rosbarsky is also the vice chair of MontPIRG’s board of directors. “There are other ways to interact with the government, especially in the local government. Being nonpartisan is often an especially effective way to create change in your local government or state government.”

Yet, Evyn Kolczak-Hardy, a double major in political science and environmental science from Missoula, explained his belief that more political clubs “Promote divided and isolated groups, creating unproductive competition.” While he said nonpartisan clubs are better, he encourages going outside a person’s main community to create change against polarization.

“I really encourage people who proclaim that they are politically involved, to take that political involvement outside of think tanks and classrooms,” Kolczak-Hardy said. “I think true political movements start in the volunteer list for the food bank or for the Missoula Aging Services. If you believe in politics, you also should believe in your communities. Go talk to your neighbor, go do anything in the real world because I think that that is like the biggest counter against existing in an echo chamber. Get offline, go talk to someone.”

EMBRACE DISCOMFORT

One repeated solution to polarization echoed by professors and students alike is the need for politics to be uncomfortable. Saldin emphasized the need to have disagreements in political discussions, and for politics to be excitingly difficult.

“I don’t mind a divisive conversation,” Saldin said. “I worry more about a lack of frank, divisive conversation. The point of the conversation is to explore these issues and all their complexity, and that in its very nature is going to be divisive. I worry more that there aren’t enough disagreements, and that’s part of what helps us learn and helps us reconsider our own perspectives and our own views.”

Haber reaffirmed that from a professor’s perspective, politics are supposed to be about “spirited discussion, not boring and calm.” He emphasized the importance of faculty not shying away facilitating conversation, and to provide materials to students to allow them to speak in class and to learn how to disagree.

Kolczak-Hardy emphasized the need to be uncomfortable for any social change, or any solution to polarization, to be made.

“We have, in a broader sense, rejected the idea of discomfort,” Kolczak-Hardy said. “Social change is uncomfortable, and often social change is violent because to try and promote social change is to go against the status quo. If people are



Maya Anderson, center, vice president of the Associated Students of the University of Montana, talks about the political climate of America in a debate at the University Center on Nov. 7. **JACKSON MAILEY | MONTANA KAIMIN**

unhappy with the situation, they also need to quickly reach an understanding that to change anything is going to require personal sacrifice, which I think a lot of people right now don’t seem that interested in doing.

Kolczak-Hardy continued to say he doesn’t know if this rejection of discomfort is because of the lack of reaching “the tipping point where the benefits outweigh the costs” or if it is because of an unwillingness to be forced to reach compromise or engage civilly. Yet he expressed a need to put oneself in hard conversations to create an opportunity for change in polarization levels.

“If people revived their willingness to be uncomfortable, I think that would assist in making some changes,” Kolczak-Hardy said.

CIVIL DIALOGUE

At the heart of all debates about solutions to polarization is a need for conversation and dialogue. Kinamon said from a student’s perspective, having conversations not just within one’s political party, but bipartisanly, creates the avenue for change in society.

“When it comes to getting rid of political violence and rhetoric, it’s literally

just having a conversation,” Kinamon said. “I think that is what people are starting to realize now. We need to have conversations. We have to continue political discourse, or else it’s going to turn into political violence. So many of my friends, even if we don’t agree on politics, I talk to them about the issue, and they agree with me, because it’s not conservative, it’s not Democrat, it’s literally just a solution to a problem.”

Saldin said civil dialogue should not be defined by people-pleasing tendencies, but by disagreements that further your beliefs.

“I think sometimes civil dialogue is understood to be a dialogue in which everyone kind of agrees and is happy and is holding hands at the end of it,” Saldin said. “To me, that’s not the point. You can have sharp disagreements, you can even have a divisive conversation, and still have civil dialogue.”

Saldin said that the importance of disagreement does a disservice to education and “the concept of life in a democracy.” He added that the point of this type of dialogue should be to explore differing perspectives of “the big questions of human life.”

Haber affirmed this perspective, explaining the dire need for professors to

not shy away from political discussion in order to prepare students for the outside world.

“Faculty should not shy away from controversial political issues when they’re pertinent to the class,” Haber said. “The humanities and the social sciences should not, I underline, should not, shy away from these controversial issues. We should facilitate conversations and be working in the classroom on ways to mitigate polarization in the broader body politic. Our graduates should be graduating with the skills of engaging with uncontroversial issues. The only way to do that is to practice.”

Bodnar agreed that the University should provide students with a platform to have all different types of debate and conversation.

“We want to teach our students to engage with ideas they agree with, with ideas they don’t agree with and to be able to engage in dialogue with people who are very different from them,” Bodnar said. “I would also tell you that we learn by engaging with people who have different views than we have.”

Did dating apps kill the meet-cute?

SYDNEY MOATE | MONTANA KAIMIN

sydney.moate@umontana.edu

Girls in America, on average, have their first boyfriend at 12.5 years old, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. They have their first kiss at 15, per the World Population Review, and Planned Parenthood reported young women lose their virginity around the age of 17. Additionally, the 2024 U.S. Census Bureau says women are getting married at an average age 28.6 years old.

So I have to wonder, am I on track?

I don't get asked out on dates and I've never had a boyfriend. I'm a social anxiety-ridden introvert bordering on agoraphobic, and if it wasn't clear already, a virgin.

So I went where all the hopeless romantics desperate for love go: dating apps.

I have some old fashioned thoughts about the tools of modern romance. We're living in an age where it's become too easy to hide behind technology. Now, if you don't like someone, you don't have to tell them to their face. You just stop texting them. I think it's cruel to ghost someone and waste their time. Still, it's the new normal.

But maybe I have it all wrong. Maybe love can be found online. I know people in long term relationships that started on dating apps, even married couples. So I stopped resisting them. I created accounts on Tinder, Hinge and Bumble. To keep this a controlled experiment,

Hey, I lovee your hair

Thanks, I grew it myself

When can I pull it?

- Alex, 25

my three profiles across the apps were exactly the same. One picture of me dirt biking, one with my mountain bike relay race team, a picture with my mom in Scotland, a picture of me kissing a dog and two selfies. My writing prompt was, "My weird but true story is ... I've been lost alone in the Italian Dolomites and the Swiss Alps. Separate occasions." I'm 21 and my interests were listed as writing, cycling and traveling. I wrote that I'm 5-foot-8-inches tall, active at the gym and open to casual dates and short-term relationships. I did not include any political or religious

affiliations.

I decided to play this as a numbers game and I wasn't picky. I swiped "yes" on every man aged 20-25, despite pictures of their cars and not their faces or group pictures where I couldn't tell which one was the guy I'd be talking to.

From Oct. 16 to 25 I swiped "yes" on maybe a couple hundred men. I matched with around half of them. I texted 20 of them. I managed to schedule five dates. I was stood up four times.

THE PARADOX OF CHOICE

"If I was a 22-year-old in my hometown of 800 people, there is no way I wouldn't get on an app," said Hyrum Booth, a 35-year-old second year doctorate student in the counseling department, who feels dating apps can create opportunities. He currently teaches the class "Intimate Relationships," a class in the counseling program that explores human relationships.

Originally from Upton, Wyoming, Booth feels that dating apps can open up a new world of possible relationships, especially in rural communities or in LGBTQ+ communities.

"We have a hard time being vulnerable and sticking our necks out. Dating apps help with that," Booth said.

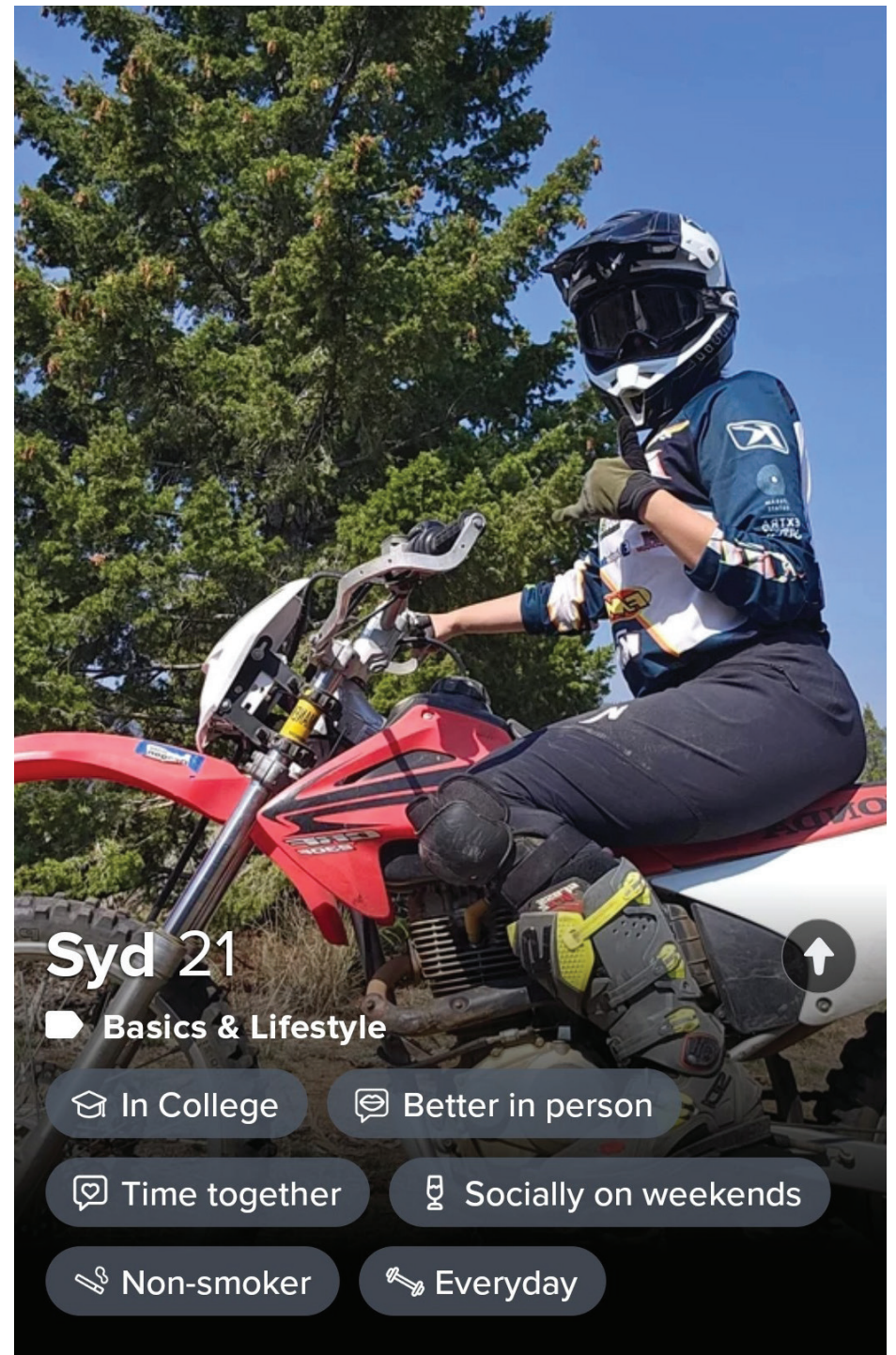
But Booth fears dating apps create a paradox of choice. There will always be

someone else to swipe on.

Before, decades ago, when people rarely left their hometowns, they only dated inside their communities. Dating apps expand that. But that paradox leaves a person wondering if there is someone better on the next profile.

The next profile may even hold Mr. Right or Ms. 100% Perfect. "It's hard to dismiss [dating apps] because that is a huge tool people are using," Booth said. "But at the same time, people are looking for that person that has no flaws. That's not real."

Booth said if you meet someone in real life, you build connections. On dating apps,



you might swipe over one little thing that you think is a deal breaker for you. This could be something small, like not liking the outdoors or clocking in under six feet, or bigger things, such as politics or religion. But if you're making a connection with them in real life,

that one thing might not matter.

Many people, especially in younger generations, use the apps for attention. "It feels good to get that validation, but is that really what you're looking for?" Booth said. "If you're looking for a healthy relationship you

need more than that.”

Though Booth has never been on the apps, he feels part of the beauty of forming relationships is getting to know someone. He said that can be done on an app, but it is easier to do on dates and conversations than texting.

HOPELESS AND AWKWARD AND DESPERATE FOR LOVE

Though I can't speak for anyone else that has ever used a dating app, texting 20 guys at once left me feeling disgusted and depressed, both from interacting with these men and for staring at my phone for too long to do it. But I persevered. Things only got worse.

After asking to reschedule our date, Daniel on Bumble never texted me back when I asked when he'd like to go out. Tinder David with the trashstache unmatched with me an hour before our date without texting to cancel. Tinder Chance and Tinder Terry both didn't show up for our date.

I had a very nice conversation at a coffee shop for an hour with Robert, 22, who I managed to sidestep on Bumble because I was already talking to him on Tinder. We talked about movies and writing, and I actually had a good time. Then he never texted me again.

Those men are the only ones I scheduled dates with. Brayden, as I gleaned from his messages, was obviously very insecure. He ghosted me when I asked for a date. Noah on Hinge said he was 22, though he looked more like 40.

Hinge Alex, a pretty normal looking 25-year-old, texted me, in his first message, “Hey, I lovee [sic] your hair.” I responded, “Thanks, I grew it myself.”

He replied, “When can I pull it?”

●● About Me

Hung like a horse. Thicc thighs save lives. Ask for my Snapchat if a monster doesn't scare you. Father to one, but you can call me daddy.

●● My weakness is...



- Jacob, 28

I got matches on Tinder from Jacob, Riley and Cody. Jacob's writing prompt was, “My weakness is ... [peach emoji] & [cherries emoji]” and he listed his job as “lead at Big Danglers.” Riley is 27 and called me “love.” Cody, 29, super liked my profile, a one-use-per-day feature that ensures the other person sees the like even if they don't have a subscription. All three of these men are single fathers. Cody

BTW, how do you want to do this whole online dating thing? Do you want to get to know each other over text or meet up sometime? Let me know, don't really know how this works.

- Brayden, 25. Never responded.

and Riley included pictures of their kids in their profiles. Jacob's “about me” said, “Hung like a horse. Father to one, but you can call me daddy.”

I got most of my matches on Tinder and the fewest on Hinge. All of my matches' ages ranged from 22 to 29. Not a single guy my age texted me.

The only guy that I actually wanted to go out with wouldn't find time for me. Most of the creeps I didn't want to go out with wouldn't find time for me. Overall, the feeling of having strangers and older men looking at my pictures and making these suggestions felt gross. Some of that was brought on by seeking it out for this story, but a lot of them also seemed like normal guys that had no problem saying something creepy in their first message.

ARE MEN THE PROBLEM?

All this paints a pretty bad picture of men. But a man writing this story and going on dates with women could have the same experience or a totally different one. I needed a man's perspective.

I spoke to Evan Marc Katz, professional dating coach and host of “The Love U Podcast.” Marc Katz started writing people's online dating profiles in 2003 before going into dating coaching and then relationship coaching. He has been on 300 online dates in 10 years.

Marc Katz said there may indeed be a problem with men and their addiction to

Do you want to get coffee sometime?

technology, but when we basically tell half the population they suck, the reaction is “fuck you.” Marc Katz feels pushing men toward “fuck you” just encourages more of the problem. It pushes everyone to safe solitude, the mentality of telling yourself you're okay being single to protect yourself.

Safe solitude doesn't solve a problem. “Maybe we can all admit we're a relational species,” Marc Katz said. “Then we can focus on a solution to the problem instead of rebelling.”

Marc Katz, 53, asked me to take off my journalist hat and have a conversation about my romantic life.

“How many men do you need to be happy as a heterosexual woman? You need none,” he said. “You could survive without it, but you'll be lonely. I don't think that's what anyone really wants.”

Marc Katz feels dating apps are worse than old school online dating was. Match.com gave users a courtship process where they wrote an essay about themselves and sent emails to suitors. Modern dating apps have removed all the personal stuff and have become a looks-based process that keeps everything in texting mode, which Marc Katz says is the worst form of communication.

“Everybody's on there and everybody's looking for the next best thing. It's a highly flawed medium,” Marc Katz said.

But Marc Katz doesn't want to treat dating apps as the doomsday of romantic

relationships. He wants to look at solutions to the problem rather than focusing on the problem.

“Two things can be true simultaneously. There is a problem and there is a way out. I don't think we have to panic about it as if it's an all or nothing type thing,” Marc Katz said. Marriage will survive even as technology makes dating harder. “People still value human connection.”

DTF EMILY

To test the success of each app, the profiles all had to be the same. But I created a second Tinder account. This account included very little information, only 21 years old, looking for short term fun, the writing prompt, “I want someone who ... is just looking for a good time,” three suggestive photos and the name Emily.

I dubbed this Tinder account “Down To Fuck Emily.”

The age restriction on this account was 18-55. I simply swiped yes on every single guy on my feed without looking at them to ensure as many matches as possible. In less than two hours DTF Emily got 25 matches and 18 texts. They ranged in age from 18-52.

Walk was the only 21-year-old I matched with as Sydney or Emily. Dustin, 47, said, “How about I show you a good time today.” His profile says he's looking for a long term relationship. Lee, 43, was looking for someone to join him and his partner.

Nic, 39, asked in his first text, “What are you doing tonight?”

I responded, “You.”

Nic quickly texted back, “Deal. What's your number?”

The first sentence of Nic's about me section is, “Looking for a genuine connection.” Nic has three kids. Two of them are in college, my age.

Nic was the only one I texted back. All the others made their offers in the first text. I deleted the account after a few hours and did not meet up with any of those men.

The results of the DTF Emily experiment perhaps reveal two truths: that there are certainly men lying about what they're looking for on dating apps, and that many of them would have no reservations about jumping into bed with a younger woman they don't know.

But it also reveals the results a woman can find by making poor choices in an attempt to find a connection.

Dating apps are one small wave in a vast ocean of technology making it easier to become addicted to technology and harder to garner real life connections.

After this experience, I deleted my accounts and won't be going back anytime soon.

I hope that more people can find the flaws in this medium and strive to find connections in the world around them. Maybe we can end the narrative that “That's just how people meet now.”

UM soccer wins Big Sky tournament title

DILLON RICHARDSON | SPORTS REPORTER

dillon.richardson@umontana.edu

The University of Montana soccer team defeated Weber State University 4-2 in penalty shootouts on Sunday, capturing its eighth Big Sky Conference tournament championship, and first since 2021.

Both wins in the tournament for Montana were in penalties, and the star for the Griz was junior goalkeeper Ashlyn Dvorak, who made two saves in both games' shootouts, as well as burying a penalty shot of her own on Sunday, which she said was the first one she had taken since middle school. Because of her play this week, Dvorak was named tournament MVP.

After the game, Dvorak said she loves the pressure that comes from the penalty shootout.

"I think that the more that you embrace the pressure and embrace how much confidence you need to have in that moment, the more successful you will be," Dvorak said. "For me, I go out there [with] as much confidence as I have, get the crowd riled up, and I just make the most of the situation."

After Dvorak's goal in penalties, Montana got one from someone unexpected: senior midfielder Chloe Seelhoff, who was able to take a shot despite a broken collarbone, something that she said had been building up to ever since her injury in October.

"The day after I got hurt our trainer Haley [Lowe] came up to me, she's like 'You could take a PK' and I was like, 'Ha ha,' like, 'Yeah right,'" Seelhoff said. "Then each day I started feeling better, slowly but surely, and I've been practicing for probably two weeks now, and it was like this big secret."

When she buried the shot, she said it was "the biggest weight off my chest in months."

The score was soon followed by chants of "Chloe" from the record-breaking crowd of over 2,200.

Chris Citowicki, head coach of the Griz, said that despite the injury, he had full confidence in Seelhoff at that moment.

"Chloe was never going to miss. Ever," he said. "How do you not want to cry immediately in that moment?"

A second stop from Dvorak put the Griz one goal away from victory, and true freshman Maycen Slater was able to beat Weber goalkeeper Lauren Butorac to send the Griz to the NCAA tournament for the first time since 2021.

But even though no goals were scored outside the shootout, the game wasn't without chances, the most dangerous of which was when Weber State appeared to score at the very end of the second overtime period, but it was determined the clock had run out just moments before the ball crossed the goal line.

"I knew it was not going to count," Citowicki said.

Senior midfielder Maddie Ditta said she wasn't so sure at the time.



Senior women's soccer player Eliza Bentler goes for a goal against the Weber State goalkeeper at the Big Sky championship game. **JACKSON MAILEY | MONTANA KAIMIN**

"It was one of my fouls that somehow gets called, so I mean to see that go in the goal and have that review, my heart stopped for a second," Ditta said. "It was so scary."

Ditta was all over the field for Montana, as she played all 110 minutes, and led the team with five shots. Citowicki said he was very impressed by her play.

"I was like 'If someone's scoring today, it's probably Maddie Ditta,'" Citowicki said.

Along with Ditta, another player who Citowicki said had a great day was junior Riley Carolan, who started on defense in place of Big Sky Conference defensive MVP Ally Henrikson, who exited the game Friday with a foot injury. The injury to Henrikson added on to the sum of injuries for the Griz, but Citowicki said the team didn't let it get to them.

"Henrikson came over to the team yesterday, to the whole defensive unit, and said, 'You guys don't need me,'" Citowicki said.

Overall, he said the response has been simple: "Next player up."

Citowicki said Carolan filled in the role perfectly.

"[Carolan] is, if this was theatre, the ultimate backup," Citowicki said. "If somebody goes down, she can hit the same notes, perform the same way."

Dvorak, who's roommates with Carolan, had only good things to say about her.

"That's my dog," Dvorak said. "I knew that she was gonna have that moment

sometime this season where she needed to step up big for the team, and she got on the all-tournament team for a reason."

Grizzlies had seven players make the all-tournament team: Dvorak, Ditta, Slater, Carolan, Eliza Bentler, Reagan Brisendine and Makena Smith.

After back-to-back seasons of losing in the semifinal as the top seed, Citowicki said it was a little bit sweeter to finally do it in front of the home crowd.

"What a turnout, what a way to win," he said. "Friday night I woke up sweating thinking to myself, 'Are we gonna have enough spots for everybody who's gonna show up to this game?'"

Sunday was the first time South Campus Stadium had ever sold out, and the attendance broke the previous record by over 250.

Next for the Griz is the NCAA tournament, something Citowicki said he's ready for. The Griz were selected to play fourth seed Washington after the selection show on Monday.

Chloe Seelhoff recently played at Washington prior to her move to UM. On Saturday, Washington's goalkeeper and former teammate of Seelhoff, Mia Hamant, died from her battle with kidney cancer.

"Dream big," Citowicki said. "What's the point of going in there scared? Just go in there throwing punches and see what happens."



The UM women's soccer team hoists the Big Sky women's soccer tournament trophy after beating Weber State in a penalty kick shootout on Nov. 9. **JACKSON MAILEY | MONTANA KAIMIN**

UM athletes resist transfer portal temptation

JACK SNOW | SPORTS REPORTER

jack.snow@umontana.edu

Some of the University of Montana's best athletes have remained loyal to the school despite an ever-changing collegiate landscape. One of them is Liam Brown, who is often found in Washington-Grizzly Stadium, pancaking defenders on crisp autumnal Saturdays.

It's more common than ever for players to transfer multiple times throughout their collegiate career, but some of the University of Montana's best athletes have been at the school since the beginning. Brown is one of those loyal few.

The redshirt senior has been a force on the Griz for almost half of a decade and has stayed loyal to the maroon and silver for his entire college career.

Finding good offensive linemen is hard. There are certain measurables that simply cannot be passed over when scouting them.

A lineman needs to be strong enough to move large defenders off the line of scrimmage, agile enough to stay between his man and the quarterback and large enough to anchor against anyone who might try to run through him.

It's rare enough to find all of those traits in a single human being, but Brown blends all of them and more.

"The community and atmosphere is amazing for game day and I don't think I'd be able to find it anywhere else," he said.

Brown said he thinks many of today's athletes are more focused on money and less on sticking with a given team.

"The NIL made people just look for their next big paycheck with the transfer portal," he said. "But I think when someone stays with a program their entire time or an extended period of time, it definitely shows that they're loyal to a team."

Having long tenured players is important to Griz football head coach Bobby Hauck as well. "We want our guys to come here as freshmen and stay for their full careers and graduate and have a good experience," Hauck said.

Hauck holds Brown in high regard as a player and is undoubtedly happy with the guard's decision to spend his college eligibility on the team.

"He's a big, physical guy, which lends itself to being capable at his position. He's a guy with high intellect, you know he's an all As guy in the classroom," Hauck said. "He's a good guy to be around."

Another one of UM's best athletes is senior Mack Konig, although she plays guard on the basketball court instead of the football field. She led the Lady Griz in both scoring and assists last year, playing 31 out of the team's 32 games.

Konig started her college journey at Mon-

tana and has spent her last three years on the team as one of the program's most effective players, shouldering an impressive workload in that time. She also earned the team's Mary Louise Pope Zimmerman Most Valuable Player award along with numerous other accolades following a prolific season last year.

UM's community is what initially drew her to the school and the basketball team has become an important aspect of her life.

"When I was looking for a school I really wanted to focus on a city that had a lot of energy, a school that really focused on its people," she said. "The players and the teammates that are here just made it very clear that this was more of a family situation than it would be with regular teammates."

For Konig, loyalty and discipline are second nature.

"You're gonna have to do a lot of hard things in your life and one of those hard things is sticking with it even when it gets kind of murky," she said. "Continuing to follow the course that you've picked is a good value to have."

Women's basketball head coach Nate Harris said that having players who return year after year is integral to team success.

"If you're gonna be really good I think that

continuity is really important, especially as a coach, because you have people who understand your message better," he said.

Beyond Konig's importance to team culture, Harris was quick to mention her prowess as a player.

"Mack is really really steady and she's really really competitive," he said. "She is going to give whatever it takes to be successful and she shows up really consistently, whether that's practice on a Wednesday or a game on a Saturday."

Her leadership has also been a boon to the team as one of its most experienced players.

"She'll do what it takes to win, if it means scoring 17 in a quarter, if it means having 12 assists, she just wants to win," Harris said. "She [leads] by example, which in my opinion is the strongest form of leadership."

As both athletes and leaders, Brown and Konig have been invaluable to their respective programs over their time at UM.

In a world where players are more incentivized than ever to bandwagon onto the highest bidding team, it's refreshing to have exceptional athletes that have been here since the beginning.

SPORTS BRIEFS

HANNAH BENITEZ | SPORTS EDITOR

hannah.benitez@umontana.edu

GRIZ BARELY HANG ON

UM football continues its undefeated streak, but not by much, as the team nearly saw defeat at home with its late-action dramatics, finishing with a score of 29-24.

The Griz saw its game against rival Eastern Washington start off with a buzz, sitting in the middle of the second quarter leading 22-0, including a one-handed catch by Korbin Hendrix that received national attention on ESPN's Sports Center.

But with Keali'i Ah Yat fighting his way out of a sack during multiple drives and the Griz completing multiple punts during the third and fourth quarter, the Griz weren't able to put much else on the board and saw the Eagles cut the deficit.

It all came down to the final drive for the Griz. Eastern Washington delivered the onside kick, but the Griz failed to get the ball as it was jumped on by the Eagle kicker, Soren McKee, allowing the Eagles to keep the ball for one final drive with one minute left in the game.

Eastern Washington's quarterback, Jake Schakel, was able to quickly get the ball down the field, ending on the Grizzlies five-yard line with six seconds left in the game.

Schakel received the snap and fumbled the ball as the clock ran out.

THE LAST HOME STRETCH

Griz volleyball will play its last two home games of the season against Idaho and Eastern Washington this week before the team makes its way to Greeley, Colorado, for the Big Sky Tournament.

The team currently sits 15-8, its best record since 2022. Montana is fourth in the Big Sky, with Idaho and Eastern Washington sitting in the bottom of the standings with two wins collectively.

Middle blocker transfer from Montana Tech, Oliva LaBeau, who has 193 kills and 226 points for Montana, has come up big for the Griz, along with Delaney Russell, the sophomore outside hitter from Denver, who currently leads the team with 329 points and 309 kills.



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About the gardens

WILL LADYMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN
william.ladyman@umontana.edu

Hues of green and brown have long surrounded students sitting in the University Center's plant-filled atrium, but few know the history of the three-story conservatory.

The University of Montana's University Center originally opened in 1969 as a garden to house plants and trees native to Montana. During the first year, the plants died due to the indoor climate not being cold enough to continue growing. A change was needed.

Over the next 50 years, the UC gardens transformed into a lush green space, where sounds of running water echo throughout the space with over 200 different species of tropical plants and two fish, creating a calm study spot for students.

"A lot of people come through here for coffee in the morning and leave, but one of my favorite things is when I'm walking through and I see people looking up at the plants and pointing at things or just sitting and enjoying themselves," Sean Helms said.

Helms is the University Center garden manager, overseeing all botanical maintenance inside the UC.

In 1972, shortly after the start of the tropical switch, the University of Texas donated the focal point of the garden: the three story tall *Ficus lyrata*, the Fiddle-leaf fig tree at the center of the garden. But it had one minor flaw. It was too big.

"We have to prune it a couple of times a year, because the leaves touch the windows and it's to prevent the sprinkler system from going off," Helms said.

In the four years Helms has worked at the UC, the ficus has triggered the laser-activated sprinkler system multiple times.

Ruby Boles is a senior environmental science major working for the UC gardens. Boles has been working at the gardens for two years, helping with planting, reseeding and testing.

"I have always liked plants. I worked at a greenhouse right out of high school and I did the PEAS farm internship," Boles

said. "I saw this job and it was right up my alley."

The beauty of the plants contrasts against their natural defenses.

In the north planter, the peace lilies are toxic to ingest. The Fiddle-leaf fig tree produces sap inside the tree that is harmful for humans to touch.

"There are quite a few plants you need to be careful about. I get worried sometimes when dogs walk through, I hope they don't nibble on them," Helms said.

Helms' big focus on the garden is the theme. There are four main planters, all with their own region: Asia, Africa, Central and South America, Australia and the Pacific Islands.

These unique plants all have a purpose in the gardens, whether it's medicinal importance, cultural significance or botanical uses.

"It's not just 'you got your hands on this thing and you planted it,'" Helms said. "It's detailed and calculated."



Big Boy Pete, the goldfish, and Hi Ho Silver, the Koi fish, swim in the pond inside the UC gardens.



Ruby Boles transfers lemongrass from soil into pots in the UC on Nov. 7. This is Boles' second year working at the gardens.



Built in 1972, the University Center houses over 200 different species of tropical plants ranging from Africa to Australia, including this Indian Laurel.