MONTANA KAIMIN

GOING THE EXTRA MILE



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Kiosk

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

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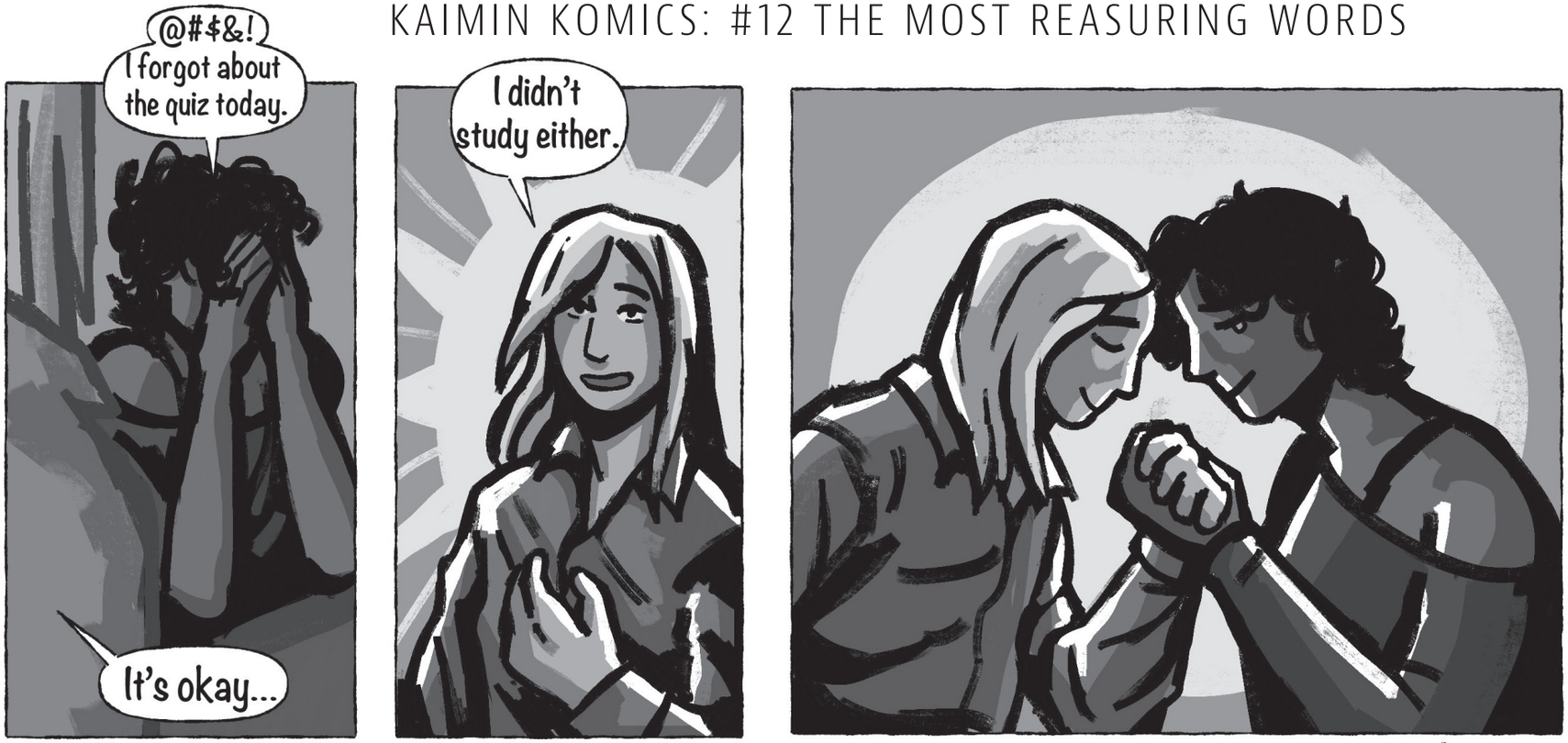
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KAIMIN KOMICS: #12 THE MOST REASURING WORDS



ALYSSA JO MURNION | CARTOONIST

The price of Black Friday

Black Friday has long signified the kickoff of the holiday shopping season, with stores promising unbeatable deals and almost impossible once-per-year savings. Historically, shoppers have woken up before dawn to wait in long lines, fight crowds and practically swim upstream in a river of people, all trying to score the best bargain.

But behind the excitement of these doorbuster sales is a culture of overconsumption. What is marketed as an opportunity to save money has become a major driver of unnecessary spending and environmental waste.

Retailers capitalize on consumer psychology by creating a sense of urgency through limited-time offers and countdowns. Shoppers feel like they have to act quickly or they might miss out on the deal. This fear of missing out can lead consumers to purchase goods simply because they are discounted, rather than because they actually need or want them.

Some sales might not even be real. A study by the UK consumer group Which? tracked 175 to 201 items across major retailers and discovered that 83% to 99% of the products promoted as Black Friday deals had been sold for the same price or lower at other times of the year. WalletHub, a U.S. personal finance company, found in a 2025 study that 36% of Black Friday listings will offer no savings compared to prices earlier in the year.

But misleading discounts are only one part of the problem. Online shopping and cyber deals made the cycle of overconsumption even easier. Gone are the days where you had to leave the comfort of your couch or even get dressed to participate in Black Friday. Now deals on an endless array of items you never really needed are just an internet connection and a click away.

Black Friday doesn't just attack your wallet. The most overlooked impacts of Black Friday are the widespread environmental costs. The increased demand encourages companies to produce more, which on the back end leads to consumption of additional raw materials, water and energy. Online shopping also generates large amounts of cardboard, plastic, bubble wrap and other packaging waste. According to Inside Climate News, as many as 80% of Black Friday purchases along with their plastic packaging end up in landfills or are burned in incinerators. The article also reports that household goods and services are responsible for a little over half of global emissions and the plastic waste from consumer goods is the primary source of physical waste.

The good news is you don't have to fall for the hype of the season. You have the power to push back against Black Friday overconsumption by being more intentional about what you buy.

As someone who regularly partakes in retail therapy, I understand the desire to shop and getting caught up in the excitement, only to end up buying things you never really needed.

Before you start shopping, make a realistic list of items that you actually need and set a budget to avoid the impulse purchases. Take the time to compare prices and ask yourself whether a sale is truly a good deal or simply a tactic by companies to get you to spend money.

This holiday season, let's choose to be mindful instead of giving in to mindless overconsumption, protecting your hard earned savings and the environment.

- Leah Goodwin, business manager
Like it? Hate it? Let us know.
Email us your opinions at henry.doellinger@umontana.edu

SUDOKU

Edited by Margie E. Burke

Difficulty: Easy

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

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HOW TO SOLVE:

Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

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

Diggin' it



Martel Construction prepares for a foundation on an extention to McGill Hall on Nov. 16. The two-story addition will expand research facilities for studying human physiology and metabolism under extreme cold conditions. **BRAYDEN VALLOW | MONTANA KAIMIN**

In local news...

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MONTANA LEGISLATURE LEADERSHIP

The Montana Legislature looks to a new year with new leadership spearheading both parties in the House of Representatives and Senate.

The rest of the country got swept in change as many voters turned to vote for the Democrats. However, this "Blue Wave" did not transition to the Montana Legislature, even with a few changes. Montana Republicans lost two seats in the Senate and House, leaving a 30-20 split and 55-43 split, respectively. The Republican Party holds the majority in both and voted on speaker of the House and Senate majority leader, according to Montana Free Press.

The Republican incumbent Ryan Fitzpatrick was re-elected to serve in the House. Fitzpatrick was the previous House majority leader, but lost to Tom Millet. Millet will be the new House majority leader for 2027. Kate Zolkinov is a Republican from Billings and will serve as the first female speaker of the House. Sue Vinton is a Republican and will serve as the Senate majority leader.

The Democrats ran candidates mostly unopposed. CJ Howell will be the House minority leader for the 2027 legislative session and Democrat Laura Smith will serve as the Senate minority leader.

MISSOULA AGREES TO LOOK AT MORE REGULATIONS ON DATA CENTERS

The commissioners of Missoula County have unanimously approved more data center zoning restrictions following a study that outlined the harms of data centers.

Last week, county commissioners in Missoula heard community voices and looked at a study that was researched by the county staff. The study demonstrated 13 different harms, such as environmental and physical effects on individuals. The commissioners approved a moratorium, which placed a pause on all data center buildings in Missoula County.

The meeting ended with every county commissioner voting to review the zoning regulations and implement stiff regulations.

"It's commendable that we collectively are at the tip of the spear here in the state of Montana, and even maybe nationally, in terms of proactively getting out in front of this issue rather than just being responsive or in a defensive posture all of the time," Commissioner Dave Strohmaier told Montana Free Press.

BILLINGS DEVELOPS AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR VETERANS

A Billings company is building a 24-unit housing development specifically for veterans to live in with extra support.

Billings is home to over 8,000 veterans, according to the latest census reports. CR Builders, LLC is a construction company in Billings and found Billings is short of 359 low-income housing for veterans. They brought the idea in front of the city council and it got approved.

The project is expected to cost $8.9 million and will be largely funded through the Low-Income Tax Credit Project. The area is 1.7 acres and sits right next to a veterans' hospital. The owner of the company says he wants to help foster community growth on top of the housing issues.

"We're trying to provide not only a good, safe, quality environment for the veterans, but we're trying to provide a platform for services," Don Sterhan, the owner, told KTVQ.

The veterans of Billings are looking forward to the project, and are hoping for future projects to take place. "I mean, the more stuff like this we can get is amazing because then we can kind of help more veterans get taken care of," Nicolas Weitman, a former Coast Guardsman, told KTVQ.

The project is still under construction and could be open as early as late 2027.



CONTRIBUTED | GOOD BONES PODCAST

This week on the Kaimin Cast...

In Bynum, Montana, a family that runs a rock shop found baby dinosaur bones and sought to expand the store to a fossil exhibit. Jack Horner, a famed paleontologist and inspiration for Jurassic Park, soon visited the site and brought the bones to Princeton University for research. But they were never given back.

"And so we walked over to her house, and sure enough, there were probably 100 pieces of baby dinosaur bones lying on a card table," Jack Horner said.

For this week's Good Bones episode, University of Montana student Will Ladyman dives into a discovery of dinosaur bones that led to lawsuits, conflict, Jurassic Park and the Epstein files.

Check out this week's episode of the Good Bones series, "In Bynum, Montana, a famed paleontologist's legacy suffered long before his name turned up in Epstein's files," by heading to our website at montanakaimin.com.

- Grace Golbach, audio editor

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

NATIONAL BRIEFS

MOST US FLIGHTS BACK UP AFTER NATIONWIDE GROUND STOP

The Federal Aviation Administration grounded all flights on Saturday after an error relating to the aging equipment. "What you saw on Friday was very, very old equipment that had a heart attack," President Donald Trump told reporters for AP News.

Much of the equipment is over 40 years old and Trump is now calling for Congress to send more money to update the systems for the FAA. "I don't take any responsibility," he told reporters.

A proposal to improve the systems has been attempted numerous times. The most recent was in 2003 when a company called Nexgen worked to overhaul the air traffic systems that consumed more than $15 billion.

Flights across the United States in major cities like New York were grounded and many were left stranded in the cities. People chose to sleep in the airports hoping to catch a later flight.

Late Saturday, some flights were back up, and as of Monday, a majority of all flights are ungrounded.

The initial problem was deemed a security threat by the FAA president before being proven to be faulty systems. The president has now been vocal about improving the systems. "The only responsibility should be, for 40 years they should have done this," he told AP News.

VOYAGER 1 REACHES 1 LIGHT DAY AWAY FROM EARTH

Voyager 1 is the farthest man-made object sent out into space, crossing the 16-billion-mile mark, or one light day away on Nov. 18.

Voyager 1 was launched in September 1977 and has since taken photos of Saturn's rings and found a faint ring system around Jupiter. In 1998, it passed Pioneer 10 as the farthest man-made object in space.

Voyager also carries a golden record, which includes "hello" in 35 different languages and sounds of music, wind and animals. The record is meant to help anything that may find it understand Earth.

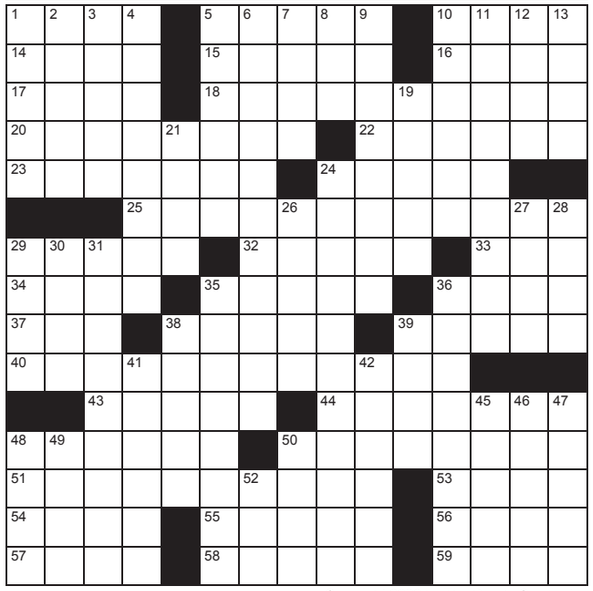
The probe continues to map the magnetic fields and particle fields in space. Earlier this year, NASA shut down the Low-Energy Charged Particle experiment to map space in favor of preserving power.

"While shutting down a science instrument is not anybody's preference, it is the best option available," Voyager mission manager Kareem Badaruddin told NPR.

NASA labeled Wednesday as 'Light Day' and encouraged people to shine VGR in Morse code as the initials of Voyager to celebrate the milestone.

The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke



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ACROSS

1 Mumbai princess
5 Banded rock
10 Drove 80 in a 60, say
14 Freudian topics
15 Linus' younger brother
16 Wiggle room
17 Showbiz "grand slam"
18 Locomotive locale
20 Source of some salmon
22 Imitated a hot dog?
23 Apparent
24 Second longest African river
25 IQ part
29 Cicero, for one
32 Bank offerings
33 Charge carrier
34 ___ even keel
35 Kirsten of 2024's "Civil War"
36 Melville's "Billy ___"
37 1983 Michael Jackson hit
38 Treasure map distances
39 Zillow listings
40 Kind of affair
43 "The Dance Class" painter
44 Had a lavish meal
48 Sailor's duffel
50 Heartbeat phase
51 Resistances to diseases
53 Rock's Clapton
54 In a frenzy
55 ____ plume: pen name
56 Pro ___ (in proportion)
57 Lion's locks
58 Daly's TV co-star
59 Author Silverstein

DOWN

1 Snorkeling sites
2 Texas A & M athlete
3 Lethal loop
4 Ancient Greek games
5 Out-and-out
6 "Star Wars" creator
7 Lily plant
8 Winery cask
9 Terminus
10 Freeload
11 Radioactive element
12 Ill at ___
13 Turned blue, maybe
19 Puts up, as drapes
21 Huck of fiction
24 Job ads, e.g.
26 Solitary sort
27 The "C" in UPC
28 They may be split
29 Tug-of-war need
30 Black gemstone
31 Odysseus portrayer of 2026
35 Harmful
36 Gives support to
38 Like some rituals
39 Lukas of "Inception"
41 Chastise
42 Makes fun of
45 Bar mitzvah reading
46 Upper crust
47 Model stick-on
48 Thailand, once
49 Actress Stone
50 FDR's coin
52 Ohio airport code

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

Magic Mike-o-scope

NAYLA SCHMIED | ARTS & CULTURE REPORTER
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The best antidote against the upcoming winter depression is some fun, if you know what I mean. Meet your wild side by finding out which of Magic Mike's hottest characters match your zodiac sign!

SCORPIO (OCT. 23- NOV. 21):
Scorpio, you're none other than Big Dick Richie, the prop guy of the Xquisite group. You're loyal to the bone — your crew and the performance is your passion. And you got some moves on and off the stage, and we all know why... don't even try to hide the infamous penis pump.

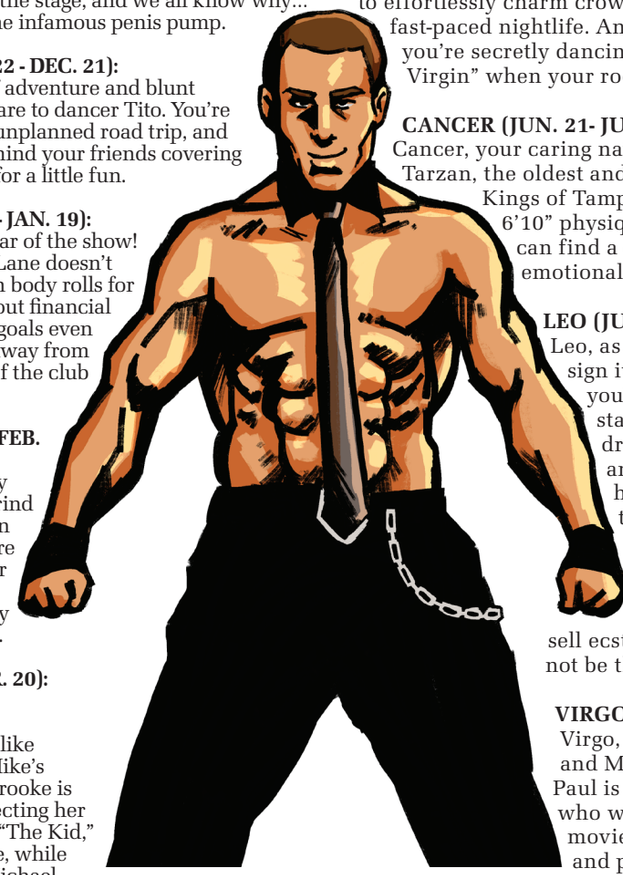
SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22 - DEC. 21):
Sagittarius, your love of adventure and blunt honesty can only compare to dancer Tito. You're the first to embrace an unplanned road trip, and I'm sure you wouldn't mind your friends covering you in whipped cream for a little fun.

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22- JAN. 19):
Capricorn, you're the star of the show! Michael "Magic Mike" Lane doesn't just show off his smooth body rolls for fun, he cares deeply about financial security and long-term goals even if that means stepping away from the endless dopamine of the club to fix his life.

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20. - FEB. 18):
Aquarius, your naturally rebellious nature and grind for your dreams are akin to Ken's character. You're a lead dancer and singer known for your vocal performances and sultry stripteases just like him.

PISCES (FEB. 19 - MAR. 20):
Pisces, you're sharp-mouthed but sensitive behind your hard shell, like Brooke. You're Magic Mike's primary love interest. Brooke is deeply invested in protecting her younger brother Adam "The Kid," who just joined Xquisite, while she tries to figure out Michael Lane's true depth, just like any Pisces would.

ARIES (MAR. 21 - APR. 19):
Aries, you're a born leader and boss, so you can only be Xquisite's owner Dallas. A former stripper and charismatic frontman, you see your own body as the blueprint of seduction. We know that the mirror in your room is not just for fit checks. How many people did you say you taught the art of torso undulations and pelvic thrusts in front of it?



ALYSSA JO MURNION | CARTOONIST

TAURUS (APR. 20 - MAY 20):
Taurus, you're ruled by Venus, and in Magic Mike's world, that's Joanna. You don't romanticize your arrangement with the show's ultimate star and openly embrace sensuality and pleasure. Do you "love to eat" just as much as she does?

GEMINI (MAY. 21 - JUN. 20):
Gemini, you're Adam "The Kid." You just discovered male revue stripping and your Gemini energy helps you get over the initial awkwardness to effortlessly charm crowds and lean into the fast-paced nightlife. And we know for sure you're secretly dancing to Madonna's "Like a Virgin" when your roommate is out.

CANCER (JUN. 21- JUL. 22):
Cancer, your caring nature can only make you Tarzan, the oldest and longest member of the Kings of Tampa. Behind your towering 6'10" physique and flowing hair one can find a deeply sensitive and emotionally intelligent soul.

LEO (JUL. 23 - AUG. 22):
Leo, as a radiant and fierce sign it's no question that you're Nora. You love standing out with your dramatic self-expression and flair. Nora's pink hair is a statement that she does not care about conventional judgement. Just try to stay out of trouble, getting someone else to sell ecstasy pills for you might not be the best idea.

VIRGO (AUG. 23 - SEP. 22):
Virgo, you're Paul, Dallas and Mike's business partner. Paul is played by Reid Carolin, who wrote and produced the movie. With your work ethic and perfectionism it wouldn't surprise us if you dropped a few classes to write a major box-office hit sexual comedy-drama.

LIBRA (SEP. 23 - OCT. 22):
Libra, your charm makes you the perfect resident DJ for Xquisite, just like Tobias. You hype up the crowd when the energy is too low and your music drives the performances and makes the audience go wild!

UM's planetarium works to raise funds to replace broken projector

JOCELYN HOOD | NEWS REPORTER
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A University of Montana crowdfunding effort for a new projector at the school's planetarium ended Friday, Nov. 13, after raising roughly $15,000.

The old projector, which stopped working in May, had been in use for over a decade and failed due to age. Cosm, a tech company that creates immersive digital displays, is currently loaning the planetarium a projector free of charge and with no requested return date, but it, too, is out of date. Brianna Beller, the planetarium's director, said the loaner could stop working before they can raise the $117,000 needed to buy a replacement.

"There is no backup plan if this projector stops working," Beller said.

The planetarium is an intimate space in the basement of The Payne Family Native American Center. It holds 32 people on a single bench around the room with the projector in the middle.

"It's very reminiscent of sitting around a campfire and looking up at the night sky, except that all of a sudden the night sky can make it look like you're flying past Jupiter," Beller said.

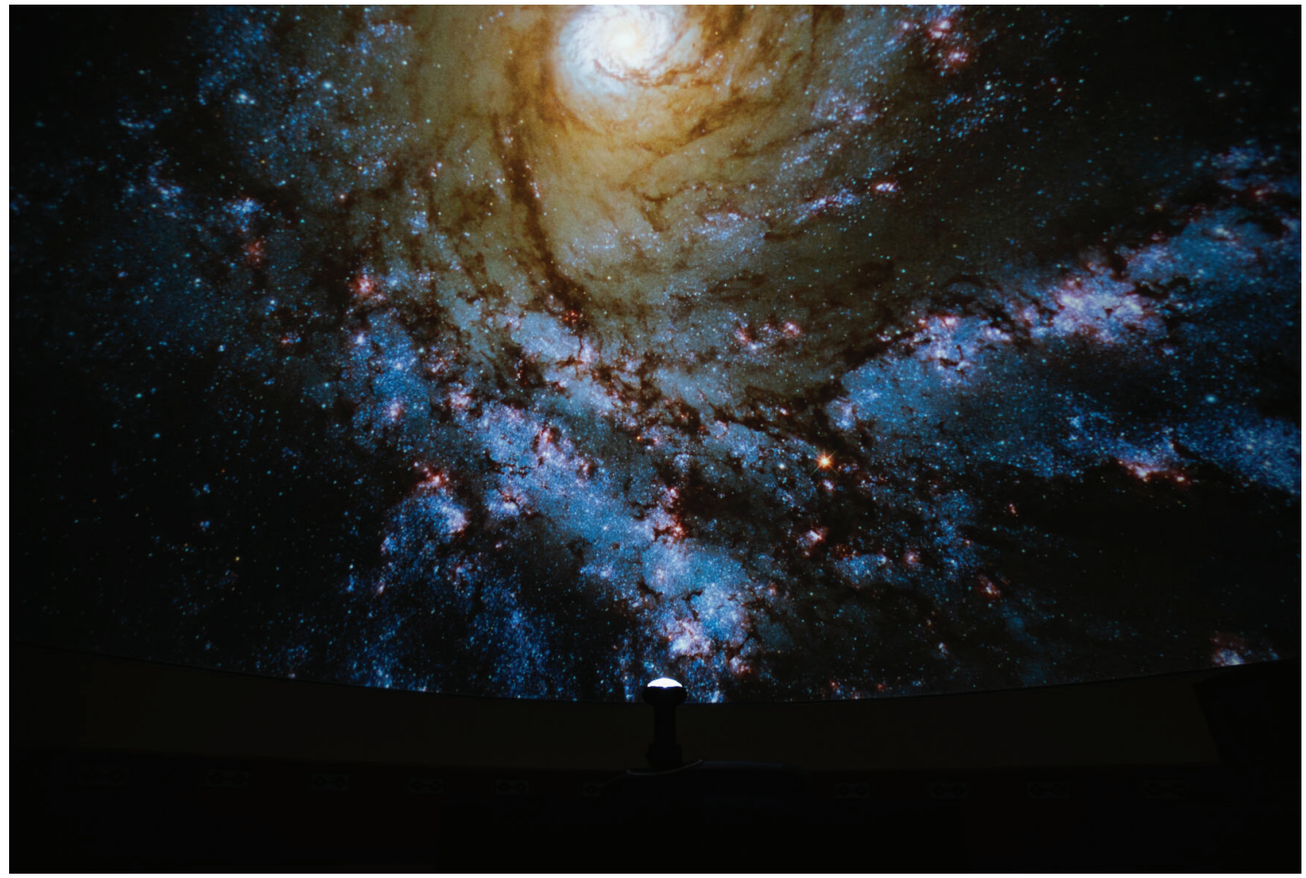
The $117,000 would be used to replace the physical projector and upgrade the software, which Beller said has been the same since 2019. The upgraded software would have a higher resolution and more current views of space.

The crowdfunding campaign was very successful, according to Beller, even though it raised only about 13% of the full goal. She said the initial goal was $5,000, which the campaign quickly surpassed. According to her, the initial goal was much lower than the $117,000 the planetarium actually needs because she never expected the community to come through with so many donations.

"We are very, very grateful for that generosity," Beller said.

In the last year, around 3,500 K-12 students, 1,000 community members, and 500 university students have visited the planetarium for field trips, public shows and classes on campus, according to Beller. She said that if the projector on loan breaks, they won't be able to serve and teach those people.

"It would be such a huge blow for the teachers who bring their students to the planetarium every year," Beller said. "There are so many things that are so difficult to learn from a page, but when you can see it in front of you, it can really click."



A projector shows an image of a spiral galaxy at UM's planetarium in The Payne Family Native American Center on Nov. 13. After UM's projector failed, Cosm loaned the projector to the planetarium for free. **MARS JOHNSON | MONTANA KAIMIN**

If a new projector is not purchased, it could also affect students' ability to earn the Planetarium Presenter Certificate, a unique career program only offered by UM that began this fall and trains students to design, operate and present live shows so they can work in planetariums. Beller said the planetarium has eight student presenters, seven of whom have declared the certificate, but without a functioning planetarium, they can't complete their required courses.

Aiden Agostinelli, a 21-year-old senior physics major from Missoula, is set to be the first person to graduate with the Planetarium Presenter Certificate in December. He said he's been presenting for three years.

"One of my favorite moments is when I let the sun pass all the way below the horizon and the stars come up, because across the room you hear little kids [say] 'Whoa,' which I think is amazing," Agostinelli said. "It's taking something mundane and bringing it into sharp focus."

He said he hopes that enough money can be raised for a new projector before the loaner shuts down.

"That would be just terrible for our community," Agostinelli said.

Gabe Hoenstine, a 25-year-old junior physics major from Hamilton, has been a presenter for about a year. He said that the first ever planetarium show he saw was during a middle school field trip to UM, and it inspired him to pursue astronomy.

"It was the coolest field trip that I've ever been on, still to this day, because it was so surreal being able to see how the stars and constellations were displayed in space inside the dome," Hoenstine said.

He said he wants others to have those same opportunities to enjoy immersive science, and that he wants to continue conveying science to people through the planetarium.

Beller, the planetarium director, said that even though the crowdfunding concluded, anyone can still donate to the cause through the Planetarium Impact Fund, which accepts general donations.

The planetarium has funds it can contribute if necessary, she said, but they were meant for annual system maintenance and professional development opportunities for students.

Donations have certainly helped the planetarium's cause, but the current funding is still a far cry from the total amount needed for all of its upgrades and replacements. More work may be required if UM wants to keep its view of the cosmos.

UM language programs raise red flags over program review

CORBIN VANDERBY | NEWS REPORTER
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The University of Montana's language programs have started to push back against a review from the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, which listed eight University of Montana programs that may be cut earlier in the semester.

"I don't think there would be an easy way for the University to cut Japanese language and studies," Japanese professor Brian Dowdle said. "It's part of the identity here."

Programs on the list, like Japanese, Russian and previously German, were put there due to low numbers in three categories: current headcount, percentage change over the past three years and the number of graduating students.

In the case of the Japanese major, enrollment dropped 70% over the past three years, from 23 students to just seven. Russian dropped 25%.

But Dowdle, one of just two Japanese professors, argues the numbers don't tell the full story. Last year, Dowdle went on sabbatical from fall 2025 to spring 2026, leaving Kevin Mulholland as the sole Japanese professor. Dowdle said he helped develop a teaching backfill plan to ensure all courses were still offered, but this fall, College of Humanities and Social Sciences interim dean Christina Yoshimura decided to cut the number of classes from 14 to eight.

As a result, some students dropped majors because they couldn't find classes that fit their schedules and didn't want to graduate later.

"The absence of classes is really what is causing it," Dowdle said. "It's not demand so much as supply, but the programmatic review that OCHE is doing assumes that if there's not students in the major."

The commissioner's office started its Montana University System-wide annual program review pilot this year to efficiently measure waning student interests through quantitative data, Joseph Thiel, deputy commissioner for academic, research and student affairs, said. But Dowdle argued that because the school's class cuts weren't accounted for, the smaller student headcount doesn't accurately reflect student demand.

Through this process, the office identified eight programs it categorized as "red," requiring UM to decide whether to cut or reinvest in each one. Because this is a pilot effort, Thiel said its main use is to refine the process, and University decisions are completely optional.

Dowdle said he is confident the University won't cut the program, but finds the metrics concerning. Current Japanese students feel the same.

Ryan Lewis, a transfer linguistics major from Montana State University Billings, said student demand is higher than the numbers portray.

"I can't tell you how many students I've talked to who would like to take more classes, but they're either not being offered in a way that they can attend, or there are just too few," Lewis said.

Another concern is that the University of Montana is the only place in the state to get a bachelor's degree in Japanese studies. Lewis herself transferred to UM for its once-broad language offerings, which MSUB couldn't compete with.

"I'm highly concerned because that's exactly why I came here," Lewis said. "It's kind of turning out completely different than what I thought it would be coming here. It's like I get here and all of a sudden, oh, this may be cut."

Clint Walker, a Russian professor, found the inclusion of his program surprising as well, considering the successful crop of past students like Kolter Stevenson, who became a Rhodes Scholar.

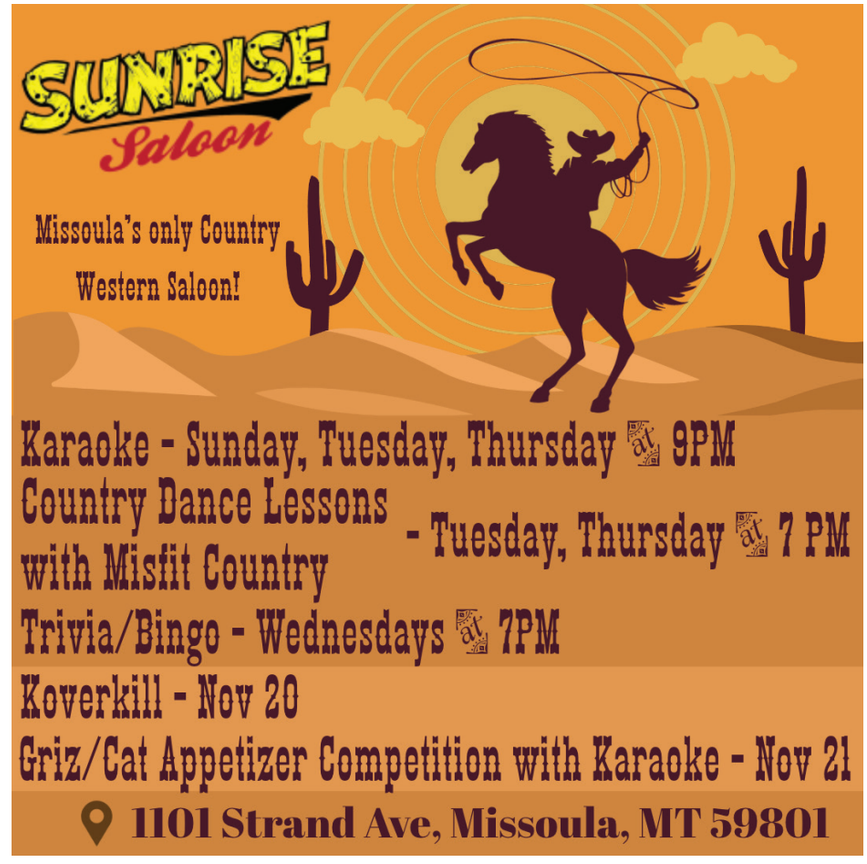
"I feel like the focus is in the wrong place. The numbers are not telling the story," Walker said. "The numbers that are being used to make a snapshot judgment are distorting the entire picture."

Dowdle mentioned UM's history and ties to Japan as just another reason not to cut the program. Mike Mansfield, a U.S. Senator and ambassador to Japan, began the program back in the 1930s. Now UM has eight sister schools in Japan, ambassadors and consulates often visit, and in 2024, it received a $5.1 million grant from the Japanese government.

"It's just a matter of making sure that these types of processes don't lose sight of mission and university identity, and start just focusing on small numbers that happen to change from one year to the next," Dowdle said.



Brian Dowdle, Japanese language and culture professor at the University of Montana, prepares movie viewers at the Missoula Public Library for a film about re-imagining death in 2022. **CHRIS LODMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN ARCHIVE**





Tenley Keltz jumps to hit a ball for Twin Bridges. The Falcons played a five-set game against Gardiner, losing 2-3 at Manhattan Christian School during the Class C Western Divisional Tournament on Nov. 6



GOING THE EXTRA MILE

A look into the unique challenges of sports at Montana's smallest high schools

Story by Mariah Henry
Photos by Parker Howery

The ball fell to the floor after the girls froze, none of them having attempted to save it. It was a disappointing ending to an otherwise impressive season.

At the Western Divisional tournament in Churchill on Nov. 5-7, the Drummond volleyball team placed third. While the team didn't advance to State, this was the highest the team placed in a decade.

Drummond is one of 99 Class C high schools in Montana — the smallest schools with generally fewer than 100 students. Class C schools face unique challenges in sports because of their small and shrinking student bodies, isolated locations and lack of resources, but retain strong community support and pride.

The classification system, alignment and rules are determined by the Montana High School Association, the governing body for the state's high school sports and activities.

Because the other three classes, B, A and AA, combined include only 85 high schools, the battle for post-season trophies isn't as steep as it is for Class C. Like Drummond's head volleyball coach Samantha Larson said, "Because of the sheer number of schools in Class C, you have to be the best of the best of the best."

ROLLING WITH THE PUNCHES

Drummond is a town of 272 about 50 miles east of Missoula in Granite County known for its cattle trucking business. When you drive by along the interstate, you'll see signs that say "Welcome to Drummond, world famous 'bullshippers.'" I-90 splits the school, with the buildings and gym on one side and the football field on the other. The school has a student population of only 73.

Having a successful team or season isn't a guarantee in Class C. Sometimes, it comes down to pure demographics: there just aren't enough good players in the same place at the same time.

"It's a recipe of chance, coaching-wise and playing-wise," said Larson, who is also

Drummond's school counselor. "Who is gonna do it?"

This season, Drummond's volleyball team went 18-5, a success Larson credits to challenging non-conference games early on. By playing teams with longtime successful programs, the Drummond girls learned and improved fast.

Because Class C teams don't usually cut players, there's often a sizable skill gap at the beginning of a season. Coaches and players have to work hard to get everyone up to par for competition. Seniors who've been all-conference players can often end up on the same team as athletes who've never touched a volleyball before.

The Trojan volleyball team was also unique in that it had four sets of sisters and one cousin; only three girls didn't have a family member on the team. According to Larson, this family dynamic made practice and travel positive, as "the sisters have a good relationship and can tease and have fun with the whole team."

By the end of the season, at the Western Divisional tournament, Drummond had improved drastically. Wearing the newest in-vogue volleyball uniforms, tank tops with separate padded sleeves, the team looked impressive and was clearly having fun on the court.

Drummond brought along a spirited contingent of fans and students to the divisional tournament. The crowd might have only been 50 people, but they cheered loudly and waved large childhood photos of the players when they scored a point. The bench celebrated, too. The Drummond girls have the same celebration for a kill, an offensive attacking point, as the University of Montana's service ace celebration: in pairs, girls lift one another up and the airborne girl makes a star with her arms and legs. Students in the crowd would join in, copying the motion.

GOING THE DISTANCE

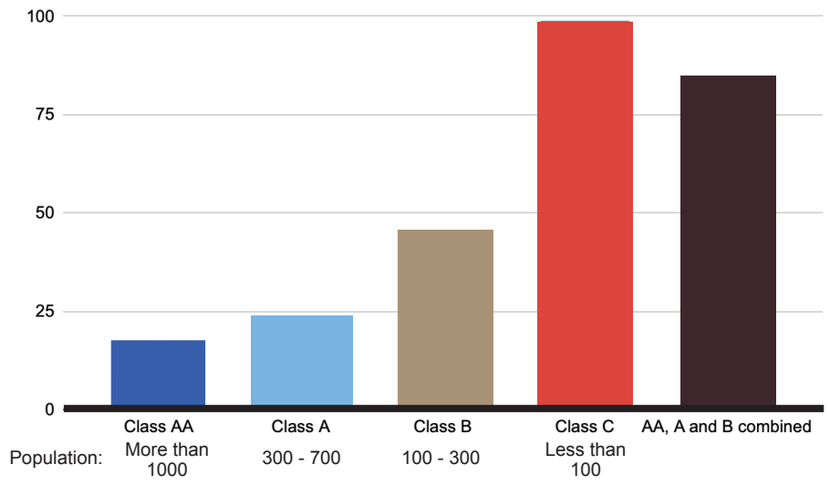
Drummond traveled 142 miles to Churchill to play in the divisional tournament. Besides tournament host Manhattan Christian, the six other teams drove an average of 179 miles.

Drummond's conference, District 13C, stretches from Lincoln to Victor and Seeley Lake, and it's a comparatively centered district.

"I'm no stranger to travel," University of Montana track and field athlete Caiden Sekuterski said. Sekuterski played Class C sports for Cascade High School near Great Falls. "For track we'd go pretty much everywhere. Football and basketball, the closest trip was 30 minutes and the farthest was almost four hours."

The bus rides for these trips were "hype," according to Martha Klaus, a junior music education major who played sports at Class C schools Noxon, near the Idaho border in northwestern Montana, and Dutton/Brady, north of Great Falls. With music blasting, girls would line up to braid each other's hair.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS



On Fridays, Klaus said her teams usually got pulled out of class a little after lunch and then traveled an average of an hour and a half for in-conference games. She said it didn't impact her schoolwork, though, as teachers were always very accommodating. Additionally, her schools had modified school weeks. "Because Noxon is so rural, they'd give us some Fridays off," Klaus said.

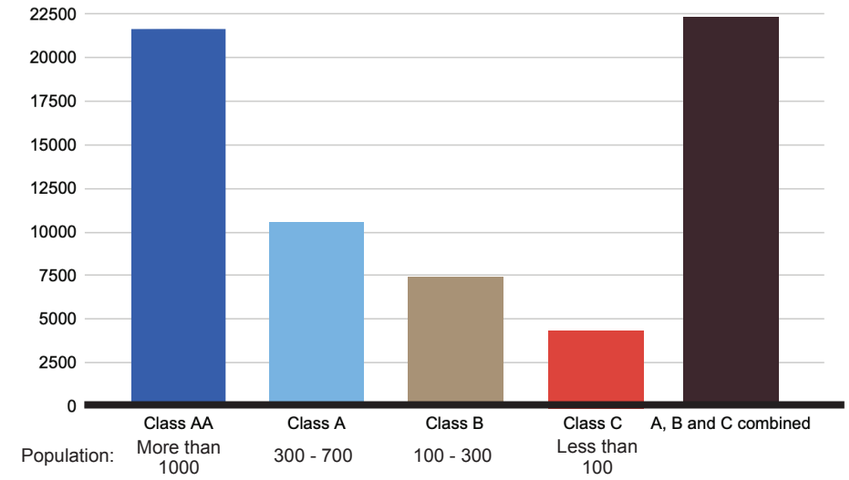
Klaus played volleyball, basketball, ran track and played in the pep band. "I was really busy, constantly busy," she said. "Because of how the sports seasons line up, there's only a week or two in between [volleyball and basketball]."

For athletes from small towns who want to pursue their sports at a higher level, it could mean commuting for hours or even moving to the nearest "big city" for coaching or offseason training. This is especially true if someone is interested in pursuing a sport not offered at the high school level in Montana, like gymnastics, hockey or lacrosse. Some sports, like swimming, soccer and baseball, are only offered at bigger schools, so a Class C athlete interested in participating has to commute and petition to join their team.

Drummond doesn't have an offseason club volleyball team. If girls want to play in the spring, they have to travel to Phillipsburg, Deer Lodge or Missoula, where club teams then travel the state or even the country for tournaments.

To make it to the next level of athletics from Class C isn't cheap, either. Nearly all Class C schools, including Drummond, receive or are eligible for federal Title I funds, which are allocated to low-income schools to ensure equal opportunity in education. In 2021, according to the U.S. House of Representatives, federal funding made up 31.8% of Montana's budget, the highest percentage of federally contributed funds in the country.

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS



LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

Co-ops, short for cooperative sponsorships, are a tactic to offset declining enrollment by combining schools' sports teams. Co-ops are becoming more common as people move away from small towns and family farms.

"It's not as easy as it sounds," Kara Triplett said. "Co-opping is hard." Triplett is the athletic director for Richey and Lambert High Schools in far eastern Montana, which have co-opped for all sports for 20 years. The two towns, which are 25 miles apart, split hosting games and practices 50/50.

"It's a lot of give and take and sacrifice," Triplett said. "Richey was one of our biggest rivals, so you're bringing two communities together that have strong individual identities and say, 'OK, now play together,' and sometimes there's strong philosophical differences."

But, at the end of the day, kids can't participate without the co-op, and the opportunity to participate in extracurriculars is too important for athletes' personal development for the schools to pass up.

Co-ops can also exist across classes. For example, Lambert joins Sidney, an A school, in order to wrestle.

Klaus' high school, Dutton/Brady, combined for academics and athletics in 2005. Later, Power High School, 12 miles away from Dutton, joined for sports. Klaus' volleyball team and the football team would bus to Power after school for practice.

After traveling for practices, "I was very exhausted when I came home," Klaus said.

But combining with another school isn't always an option, and it's not always successful. Some schools, like Drummond, are simply too far away to make co-ops work. Drummond does co-op with Phillipsburg, 27 miles away, for football, but no other sports. Each individual school is more likely to be able to field a basketball or volleyball team on its own than football, because football requires more players, so the co-op is only necessary for football.

Because of some schools' inability to combine, some parents and fans feel like there should be a fifth class for singleton schools to balance against the dominance of co-ops and private schools that draw players from larger geographic areas and almost always have enough students to field solid teams.

"It's just not apples to apples," said Eric Reinertson, the father of two girls who played sports for Gardiner High School starting in eighth grade. "Even though their student population is under the Class C limits, it's just different because of where the kids come from. My thought is that you could have a Class D for truly rural public schools who don't have the chance to combine."

Gardiner, where Reinertson resides, is logistically too far away from any other town to join forces with. The nearest Class C town is West Yellowstone, 56 miles away through Yellowstone National Park, which is not an option during most of the school year when the park is closed, making coordinated practices and travel impossible.

Montana does have a separate athletic association for private, Christian schools, the Montana Christian Athletic Association, but a few Christian or Catholic private schools, like Missoula's Valley Christian or Loyola Sacred Heart, choose to participate in Montana High School Association sports. According to Triplett, the private schools that join the MHSA do so because it's more competitive and they want to win state championships.

Manhattan Christian School is a private school located in Churchill that regularly dominates volleyball, basketball and cross country MHSA state tournaments. In the last 10 years, Manhattan Christian has been the winner or runner-up in five state volleyball tournaments, six boys' basketball tournaments, nine boys' cross country title races and four girls' cross country title races.

SMALL BALL

To keep sports programs afloat when athletes are at a premium, many Class C schools "move up" eighth graders to play on high school teams.

Carmen Harbach, athletic director, volleyball coach and librarian at Gardiner High School, said it was rare for eighth graders to be required to complete a team at the beginning of her tenure. Now, "The numbers are so low you kinda have to have eighth graders," she said.

When eighth graders were initially allowed on high school teams about 20 years ago, Triplett said the decision wasn't popular. "It was a really big shift, and it was a hard sell to get schools in Montana to consider eighth grade participation," she said. "People really didn't want the change for Montana." But, Triplett said, neighboring North Dakota had been allowing eighth and even seventh graders to play for high school teams for many years prior, and its success helped convince folks who lived near the Montana-North Dakota border.

The Montana High School Association recently changed the rules around promoting eighth graders, making it easier for schools to move them up. Previously, each school had to petition the MHSA every season for specific eighth graders to play in high school, and the move prevented them from playing on the junior high teams, often leaving sixth and seventh graders without a full team to compete with.

Now, any eighth grader can play on the high school team for any reason while still playing for the junior high team, according to Triplett, who is also the MHSA executive board president and Class C representative. "It's just up to the local school boards to set parameters around that, as long as [players] meet all the other requirements, like number of practices," Triplett said.

Moving up to play on a high school team can be hard on eighth graders, even if they're just playing for the junior varsity or freshman teams. Class C schools can't always field subvarsity teams, especially C-squad or freshmen teams, so eighth graders are usually used to fill out those rosters. Larson said she won't bring up eighth graders to play for Drummond's varsity volleyball team unless absolutely necessary.



Griz track and field jumper Caiden Sekuterski sits for a portrait in the jump pit on Nov. 13. Sekuterski played in the Class C division in high school. **JACKSON MAILEY | MONTANA KAIMIN**

"It's bad for their bodies and their mental toughness," Larson said. To play on a varsity team, and potentially have the whole team depending on you to play and succeed, can be a lot of pressure for a 13- or 14-year-old eighth grader. Instead, Larson said, she'll use eighth graders to fill out a C-squad or JV team, where girls learn and improve a lot more than they might on a junior high team, better preparing them for the varsity team when the time comes.

THE BIG LEAGUES

Because of a lack of opportunities for higher-level play and exposure to college scouts or programs, it's relatively unusual for a Class C athlete to play for a Division I program.

Talented Class C athletes more commonly play for National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics schools, like Carroll College in Helena, Montana Technological University in Butte or University of Montana-Western in Dillon.

Montana State University recruits Class C players more often than the Griz, according to Larson. MSU currently has one men's basketball player, two women's cross country and basketball players, each, three football players and five women's track and field athletes from Class C schools.

The University of Montana's women's basketball coach, Robin Selvig, after whom the court is named, is from Outlook in extreme northeastern Montana. Outlook High School, which was Class C, no longer exists.

Currently, only two Griz athletes came from a small Montana program, football player Kade Cutler from Phillipsburg and track and field athlete Caiden Sekuterski from Cascade. Next year, another Class C athlete from Superior, Landon Richards, will be joining the track team as well.

Sekuterski, a 20-year-old junior, said the biggest transition between Class C and D1 was more and better coaching opportunities. "In Class C, it's just a parent so many times," he said. "All my assistant coaches were parents." Sekuterski said that part of the reason this was the case is because track and field is somewhat neglected in Class C, as everyone else is more focused on football and basketball.

When coaches aren't community members or parents, they often have multiple jobs at their schools. Whereas bigger schools might be able to afford to hire someone just to coach, Class C schools often hire from within. These coaches don't necessarily have coaching expertise beyond having played the sport in high school, according to Sekuterski.

Sekuterski also played eight-man football and basketball, where he said the competition was steep. Before deciding to come to UM for track, he also got two NAIA offers for football.

As for the sports atmosphere in Cascade as a whole, Sekuterski compared it to a giant family. "It's really different. You walk around your high school and you know everyone and their families," he said.

WE'VE GOT SPIRIT, YES WE DO

Despite their challenges, Class C sports are often at the heart of communities. Small towns in middle-of-nowhere Montana take pride in having a sports team as part of their local identity.

There's a feeling of togetherness in the gym on bleak, dark midwinter nights, where locals pile in ready to cheer on basketball games. It doesn't matter if the team is particularly good — they're just there to have a good time.

"You might get bigger crowds there than at AA, especially for basketball," said Blake Shaw, a high school basketball referee for 25 years and a volleyball referee for 12.

Klaus described basketball games as intense. "The vibes were high, and people were excited. Sometimes the student section would make the bleachers shake," she said.

Shaw says he prefers refereeing Class C games. "The people are so much nicer," he said. "I can say 'Hi' to folks I've known from over the years, and I can't get that at Bozeman." Shaw, originally from Whitehall, said AA schools are expected to win all the time. If they don't, the fans look for someone to blame, and that's often the refs.

"The community, fans and family helps against isolation," said Chloe Chase, a Class C alum who now resides in Churchill. "Bigger schools might not have that feeling. Even when you don't know the players, you feel a connection to them."

Klaus' experience in Class C is part of why she chose to pursue music education. "I've seen the need for educators at small schools," she said. "Just because students live in a smaller community doesn't mean they don't deserve high-quality education."

As for Drummond, the volleyball team ultimately fell to Valley Christian, a private school from Missoula, in an agonizing five-set match. But its scrappy defense, stuff blocks, enthusiastic bench and supportive crowd made the Trojans one of the top 12 Class C teams in the state this year. After working so hard on the volleyball court, many girls will immediately transition to basketball season, when fans will continue to show up to the gym on weekend nights.

Families who played together as kids gather again to watch the next generation. Spectators from opposing sides chat together like old friends, because they probably are, even if they're former rivals. Montana is just one big small town, and the sports at the smallest high schools link it all together, creating lasting lessons, friendships and memories for anyone who played despite the hardships.

Zootown lineup draws mixed reactions

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Groups gather around vendors at the Missoula fairgrounds during Zootown Festival on June 19, 2026. **BROOKE STRICKLER | MONTANA KAIMIN**

Every summer, when the Clark Fork fills with floating tubes and hot chocolate gives way to huckleberry ice cream, Montana's version of Coachella travels to Missoula.

The Zootown Festival is an outdoor, two-day music event at the Missoula Fairgrounds, with an artist-packed lineup that has occurred yearly since 2025 and is set for June 18 and 19 of 2027. This year's lineup was announced on Oct. 27.

The lineup includes over 20 artists, with headliners Jack Johnson and Brandi Carlile. Each year, the lineup is highly anticipated among Missoula residents. Yet among college students at the University of Montana, it drew a mixed reaction.

In an interview with event founder and co-producer Scott Osburn, he explained how the festival started and how they select each year's artists. When picking the lineup, he thinks about the demographic that fits the festival's area and the artists who would fit in well. He says they usually start with picking the headliners and go down, focusing on creating a lineup that "still kind of reaches a wider demographic."

"I think on this year's lineup, the headliners probably are maybe more appealing to an older demographic," Osburn said. "We think the lineup and the bands that we've booked underneath those headliners could also be appealing to a younger demographic too. It's not like we're gonna have singer-songwriter folk with hip hop, but we're trying to be as diverse on the lineup as we can."

The lineup this year is more controversial among college students than in years past. Layla Riggs, a sophomore from Helena studying anthropology, shared her dissatisfaction after seeing the lineup at Zootown in its opening year.

When Riggs went to Zootown two summers ago, which she called a "more indie-folk kind of festival," she was ecstatic about the lineup and was on her phone her entire class period to get tickets because she was excited to see Hozier. While she said she will go this year if she has the funds, she said she was "pretty disappointed" when the lineup dropped.

"I also kind of felt the same way last year too, where I just feel like they went really big with their first year, and they knocked it out of the park," Riggs said. "Hozier, Kacey Musgraves, Julien Baker ... I like Brandi Carlile, but there's pretty much no one else on there that is worth an almost $300 ticket."

Riggs attributes the festival's change to a shift toward more "folk and country," as well as a change in its target age demographic, specifically an older audience. She also questioned whether these larger artists could be recruited for the festival in the first place.

On the other hand, Alena Hall, a fourth-year communications major from Seattle, stated she was excited to attend the festival while she's in Montana for the summer.

"I'm a huge Jack Johnson fan, so I was super excited for that," Hall said. "Brandi is from Seattle, so we've all known about her for quite a while. Of course, I like Whiskey Myers and stuff, so I'm excited for them, but there's a couple of other artists I don't know as well."

While Hall said she is favorable toward the lineup, she also said she wishes it could be better. She said much of the music is in the same genre and expressed a desire for more variety, and hypothesized that the artists were chosen because they fit Missoula's "folky" vibe.

Hall noted that a possible reason for the dissatisfaction was that some people wanted a different vibe than the festival offers and are "looking for something more hype." Yet she says she still thinks there's a way to enjoy the festival.

"Missoula in the summer is a great place to be regardless," Hall said. "Even if you don't like the music, live music is still live music."

After graduating from the UM business school with a focus on entertainment management in 2010, Osburn had a passion and idea to build a festival.

"The marketplace just wasn't in the right place for that in 2010," Osburn said. "So I moved back to Dallas and started a live entertainment business down there, which I sold a couple years ago. Afterward, I started putting all my efforts back into trying to figure out a way to produce a music festival in Missoula."

Later, Osburn worked with Parks and Recreation in Missoula to find a location for the festival and settled on the fairgrounds. He said that when building other entertainment properties and festivals, "we think the place is just as important as the music in itself," and emphasized Missoula as a place that stands out for its culture and "natural and local cultural perspective" during the summer.

Osburn highlighted the chance to discover new music by attending the festival. He said that while people like Sierra Ferrell, Brandi Carlile and Jack Johnson are "mainstream artists," there is also an opportunity to see if there's something else, such as new artists or festival elements, that could be appealing to visitors.

"There's a lot of really hot young up-and-coming artists that are on this lineup that I think would be quite appealing," Osburn said. "At the same time, too, the music festival obviously has music as the primary focus, but there's also a lot that goes on activation-wise and experiential-wise on the grounds and during the weekend. I'd like to think that even if every bit of the lineup doesn't appeal directly to each person, that there's enough going on that still makes it a worthwhile experience."

Atomic Tacos opens on Alder Street

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Kalispell-based Korean-Mexican fusion restaurant Atomic Tacos opened a second location on Oct. 20 in the former James Bar on Alder Street.

Revered in its hometown, the restaurant offers small plates, tacos and burritos. Most plates are $11 to $15.

The business had been wanting to open a second location for a while now, according to manager Brianna Smith.

"We checked out multiple places and landed in Missoula," Smith said. "They knew the old owners of the [James Bar], which made the process smooth."

When you walk in, you're greeted by warm light and reggae. The music isn't too loud to drown out your partner, which is super nice. Vines crawl on trellises in a back corner of the restaurant.

The staff was super open and friendly. Our orders were out within five minutes.

I ordered the Dragon Belly tacos in a soft shell, which included kimchi aioli, red onions, red bell peppers, green onions and sesame seeds over a sweet pork belly base. The combination of the kimchi and the more traditional Mexican ingredients led to a very delicate flavor. I look for the right amount of spice in tacos, where the meat is just spicy enough to feel it but not enough to interfere with dinner, and I feel they met that balance.

Finding that perfect balance has been paying off, according to Smith.

"Business has been great — normally we're slammed. Our restaurant is designed to be a 'fast casual' concept, and people love it. Even on a Wednesday, we're busy, which people are surprised about," she said.

Every customer I talked to Thursday night was satisfied with their meals.

"We got the pork belly and chicken burritos, and they were totally worth it for the price," Mimi Sokoloski said while dining with her husband, Don.

Atomic Tacos' two locations have different menus, according to Smith. Its Kalispell location focuses on a more Hawaiian/Polynesian concept, whereas Missoula uses a more Korean-based concept, centering on smaller plates such as gyro and carne asada fries.

My only complaint was that the tacos don't come with salsa, which is a bit of a classic. Guacamole and pico are also an additional charge. The chips were very salty and dry, which isn't crucial to the meal, but quality tortilla chips can definitely supplement a solid taco.

Overall, I give Atomic Tacos a 9 out of 10, and I would certainly recommend people go check it out.

LOVE AND SEX

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OPINION:
THEY'RE NOT YOUR PROBLEM ANYMORE

Going through a breakup is painful and humbling, especially a breakup caused by one partner believing there are better and brighter things out there. Even worse if that turns out to not be the case.

Last January, former university president Seth Bodnar announced he was leaving his position so he could run for the U.S. Senate. This November, we watched him lose the position he left the University of Montana to run for. Watching it felt sad, like running into an ex I still cared for who was doing noticeably worse since I'd last seen them.

Part of it feels like you're being proven right, that you "won the breakup." However, it doesn't change the blaring fact that someone you used to love and care about is not doing well, and all there is to do is watch.

"Obviously it's sad to see someone who you still care about doing bad," 19-year-old Caoimhe Gallagher, majoring in interim physics, said. "I feel like sometimes it's kind of freeing to be like 'Oh I'm not a part of that anymore.'" So where do you go from there?

Blocking, or going no contact, can seem harsh, but when I've often found myself stuck in the endless cycle of checking their page and questioning whether to reach out, it's been the only thing that helps.

While it makes the healing process easier, to the blockee, it can be seen as an act of hostility. "If it was a mutual breakup, and there's no bad blood, I think it's totally fine to keep them on social media," 19-year-old Lexi Surbaugh said.

Seeing Seth Bodnar lose his election after leaving UM invoked the familiar feeling of seeing someone who used to be a part of your life doing badly and wanting to help fix it. But you can't burden yourself with that responsibility anymore. Sometimes the best thing you can do for them, and for yourself, is to keep your distance and leave them alone.

It's a delicate balancing act of standing firm in your own boundaries while dealing with the clear fact that you still care for that person. Watching their struggle can be painful, but trying to jump in can make it worse for everyone. So stick to your boundaries and release yourself from the pressure of having to take care of someone else. They'll be fine, but the relationship's over, time to focus back on yourself.



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SPECIAL EVENTS

Six Shorts From Goosetown — *ZACC*, 11/19-21, 7 p.m., $20
Homegrown, comedy gold theater in your own backyard. Missoula theater company, the Moonrisers, present six comedic shorts, each written in under 60 minutes and rehearsed for no more than six hours.

The Way Out: Ski Film & Avalanche Center Benefit — *The Wilma*, 11/19, 7 p.m., $25
Matchstick Productions returns with its 34th annual ski film, "The Way Out," a raw tribute to the timeless culture and lifestyle of skiing. From legendary veterans to rising breakout talent and powder stashes across the globe, the message is simple: The soul of skiing isn't dead, it's waiting wherever snow falls.

Bubblegum Night Market — *Elks Lodge*, 11/21, 6 p.m.
All-ages night market featuring local creators, vintage sellers, artists, fashion vendors and live music from Doctor Fly, drag wresling and more.

Indigenous Made Winter Market — *Missoula County Fairgrounds*, 11/28-29, 10 a.m.
Spend the weekend exploring the work of over 70 Indigenous artists and makers, enjoying food, performances and activities.

ON CAMPUS

UM School of Music: Jazz Gala: "Kind of Dukish" — *ALI Auditorium,* 11/19, 7:30 p.m.
Small groups and the UM Jazz band presents, "Kind of Dukish," a celebration and presentation of the works of Jazz legend Duke Ellington.

A Christmas Carol — 11/19-22, 7:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m. matinee 11/22. $23
Charles Dickens' classic story comes to life in this fresh adaptation by Lavina Jadhwani.

MUSIC

The Brothers Comatose — *The Wilma,* 11/21, 7 p.m., $35
This five-piece West Coast string band comes to the Wilma for a night of bluegrass and high energy folk-rock sound, featuring songs from their latest album, "Golden Grass."

Funksgiving — *The Wilma,* 11/22, 7 p.m., $35
Step back into the 70s for a dance club experience 11 years in the running. Featuring the sounds of Bozeman-based funk band "The Sweet Groovalicious Funk Machine" and disco duo "Desperate Electric."

WEEKLY ROTATORS

Jazz Night — *The Old Post,* Every Thursday, 6 p.m.
A live jazz band in the Old Post's central dining room.

Students seek to restart UM women's club lacrosse team

JULIAN CLEMMER | SPORTS REPORTER
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University of Montana women's lacrosse club president Kate Waugh stands for a portrait on the Oval on Nov. 13. **BRAYDEN VALLOW | MONTANA KAIMIN**

A few fresh faces at the University of Montana are part of a student-led initiative to organize a club team for women's lacrosse.

UM is no stranger to lacrosse, being home to a men's club team called Griz Lax. Currently, a women's lacrosse team is beginning to take shape.

"We're building the club back up from ground zero," freshman psychology major and club vice president Bella Strand said.

Women's lacrosse is not a completely novel activity to UM, as a women's team had been active in years past. "There was a team way before COVID and then it got disbanded because of COVID because a lot of girls were upperclassmen," Strand said.

Strand and club president Kate Waugh's efforts are not the first time women's lacrosse has tried to return to a post-COVID UM. Waugh and Strand had heard that last year, a few students tried to get the club started but were unable to due to scheduling and field availability.

"A lot of us were told there was a team, so when we got here and there was kind of none it was kind of disappointing," Waugh said.

Due to this absence, Waugh and others decided to start it themselves to continue the sport they enjoyed.

"I started playing lacrosse four years ago in high school," Strand said. "I've been playing for a while and I really grew to love the sport and the community that comes with that sport."

Waugh has been playing even longer. "My mom played lacrosse when she was in high school, so it was always something that I got into when I was young and just always really loved it," she said.

Waugh is a Michigan native and won a few awards for her lacrosse ability. "My senior year I ended up doing really well and I was third team all-state," Waugh said.

Men's and women's lacrosse differ greatly in equipment, rules and playstyle. "I wouldn't even consider them the same sport," Waugh said.

The general idea of both sports is the same, players face off against another team and try to gain possession of a rubber ball and shoot it with a lacrosse stick past the enemy goalie into the opponent's goal to score a point.

Men's lacrosse is much more of a contact sport. Men's team players usually wear helmets and other protective equipment in order to protect themselves from collisions with other players that are not uncommon in the sport.

"It's similar to football in the sense where you can just run people over and kind of hit people with your stick," Strand said.

Women's lacrosse has less contact and players wear less protective equipment. "We just have goggles and a mouth guard," Waugh said. "If you want to wear a helmet, you can, but most girls don't."

This makes women's lacrosse much more about finesse with the ball and effective positioning to score rather than the raw power and physicality in men's lacrosse.

Women's teams can field more players, 12, including the goalie, while men's teams can only bring 10 on the field.

Apart from the protective gear, another main difference is the lacrosse stick itself. Men's lacrosse sticks are generally larger and are more varied depending on whether the individual player is on offense, defense or playing goalie.

Women's lacrosse sticks are on average shorter and are the same across the offense and defense, with only the goalie having a different size.

The net of the stick, the part where the ball is caught by players, is also different. The men's nets are deeper, allowing easier containment of the ball. Women's nets are shallower, meaning the ball is less firmly contained in the net, but easier to throw.

While the team has mostly gone through the monotony of paperwork for starting a club, there is still much to be done.

The team has enough prospective members. Waugh estimates around 19 to 20 people have expressed interest. Right now, the team needs to find a coach and a place to practice.

While no official practices have been planned, Waugh and Strand are hopeful they can get the program going in full swing during the spring semester with practices and league games against other women's lacrosse teams in Montana.

Are the Griz where they should be?

MARIN ANDERSON | SPORTS REPORTER
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University of Montana students and social media followers of the Montana Kaimin were posed with the simple polling question: "Do you think the football team is where it should be?"

The Griz are currently 8-3 overall and tied for second in the Big Sky Conference, but had pivotal losses to the University of Northern Arizona and the University of Idaho. With a home playoff game on the line, after a day of the survey being available, 72% of voters do not think the football team is up to par.

Last year, UM was 11-0 before the Brawl of the Wild and scored more than twice the amount of points than its opponents through the season.

Multiple students and Griz fans blame the defense and the way it's run as the main challenge the football program faces.

"We should either try to help our defensive coordinator get better or just get a new defensive coordinator overall. It seems like the defense knows the plays and knows what's going on, but they don't really know how to read the other team's offense accurately," Kai Griffin, a UM sophomore, said. "They go by the playbook and that's about it."

UM defensive coordinator and linebacker coach Eric Sanders is a new addition to the football staff. He was hired by head coach Bobby Kennedy in March after a staff shakeup when former Griz head coach Bobby Hauck moved to the University of Illinois. He was previously a defensive run game coordinator and linebacker coach at Eastern Washington University, where they had a losing record both years he was there.

However, Kennedy has consistently backed both Sanders and his entire team on multiple occasions.

"I have never doubted this team or this staff, and I tell the guys that all the time," Kennedy said in a press conference after UM's win against Idaho State. "I've got unwavering belief in Montana, unwavering belief in these guys, and I really love the guys that I've been able to surround myself with."

Griffin is one of many Griz fans who believe Sanders and the football team is not where it should be, claiming the defensive passing game is the biggest weakness the team faces.



Griz running back Eli Gillman jumps into the endzone for a touchdown during a match against Idaho State University on Nov. 14. The next game will be in Bozeman against Montana State on Nov. 21.
EMBRY ERICSON | MONTANA KAIMIN

"A lot of times other teams' offenses will make the same play over and over and the defense falls for it. It makes you wonder, 'How is that possible?'" Griffin said.

Lifelong Griz fan Billy Palmer, 25, agreed the defense needs work, but felt like the team was strong in other areas.

"They have a few things they can improve on the defensive side of the ball, but the offense is sitting where they should be," Palmer said. "They're starting to mesh together well and getting things figured out."

Luckily for the Griz, everyone who said they are lacking defensively claimed the offense is quite the opposite.

"Brooks Davis and Eli Gillman on offense are explosive, and we have one of the best offenses in the Big Sky," UM graduate student Kohl Plowman said. "I just don't think that they're where they need to be on defense."

Although 72% of students said football isn't where it should be, 28% begged to differ. Opposing viewpoints from fans such as UM sophomore Peyton Njos said that the Griz are exactly where they should be.

"They're not, of course, going to be national champions, but they're doing really well. Especially with a new coach, that's going to be a hard adjustment for any team," Njos said. "Gillman gets a million touchdowns a game. And then even last week, a kid I knew, Chase Cook, got a touchdown and this is his first year playing, so that was awesome."

Although Gillman, Davis and Keali'i Ah Yat are strong components to the offense, Griz fans such as Pablo Hernandez, 25, said that the football team's performance goes beyond individual players.

"It's not only the coach, it's the whole team in charge of their standings," Hernandez said. "You can't have a player like Gillman and say they're an outcast or they're one of the primaries. No, it is a team. You have many, many players on the team and you have to go do it together."

The Griz are heading to Bozeman next week, where they will face longtime rivals Montana State University in the iconic Cat-Griz game. The Bobcats are currently 10-1 overall and first in the Big Sky Conference.

SPORTS BRIEFS

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FINAL HOME WIN

The University of Montana football team won its last home game of the regular season after defeating the Idaho State Bengals in its annual night game that was broadcast on ESPN's main channel, with a score of 38-30.

Montana moved up to second in the Big Sky Conference, behind in-state rivals Montana State University, and ninth in the Football Subdivision Conference Coaches' Poll.

The Bengals opened up the scoring with a two-yard run by Isaiah Su'esu'e for a touchdown, but Montana didn't let the Bengals hold on for long. Monte Gillman ran for an impressive 96-yard kickoff return to even the score.

The Grizzlies saw its score tripled in the second quarter with touchdowns from Landon Ransom-Goelz and Devin Dunn, who caught an interception from the Bengals. The Griz also saw a field goal conversion from kicker Jo Silver.

The teams continued to trade scoring conversions until the Grizzlies went up 38-30. UM fans saw quarterback Keali'i Ah Yat give up a chance to score a final touchdown in the game as he took a knee to end the game with 30 seconds left.

UM will travel this weekend to Bozeman to take on the Montana State Bobcats in the annual Brawl of the Wild game. UM lost against the Bobcats twice last season, 31-28 in the Brawl of the Wild and 48-23 in the FCS semifinal playoff game.

COME-FROM-BEHIND WIN

The University of Montana men's basketball team won its game in Grand Forks, North Dakota 80-71 against the North Dakota Fighting Hawks, despite travel delays, a changed game time and a power outage midgame.

Jordan Clark put on a highlight performance on the offensive side of the ball with 27 points. The Grizzlies overall scored 47 points in the second half.

UM was also able to out rebound the Fighting Hawks with 43 rebounds compared to North Dakota's 25.

Montana started the first half with a 10-0 run to take the early lead, but North Dakota came back to score 18 points within 11 minutes.

With only 10 minutes remaining in the game, the Grizzlies trailed 58-47. Montana went on to score seven straight points to cut the lead to four and the defense was able to force the Fighting Hawks to only score one basket in six minutes.

With the game on the line, head coach for the Griz, Travis DeCuire, switched his defense to force more rebounds and to take more chances at the three-point line.

After the move, UM went on a 7-0 run to the lead to 64-60. The team went 20 out of 28 from the free-throw line, its best record of the season, to secure the win.

Back where the music began

BRAYDEN VALLOW | PHOTOGRAPHER
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As the lights went down and smoke machines filled the room, a faint guitar strum ignited the Top Hat restaurant with cheers from shoulder-to-shoulder fans.

Missoula-born singer-songwriter Maris Maddux-Ward, who goes by MARIS, took the stage on Nov. 10 with the force hometown fans expected.

"You can feel the energy when an artist comes back to their hometown. It must feel like a nostalgic childhood dream," founder of Missoula's Mountain Song School, Skylar Lydia, said. "I found out she was from Missoula, so of course I wanted to invest."

MARIS' Mosh Pit The Tour came to Missoula on the last leg of her North American run as a nod to her roots and hometown fans. Her performance marked 23 of 25 locations on her tour.

MARIS took an interest in music while still in high school, moved to New York at 18, then to Los Angeles, where she rose to prominence with her 2023 EP, "Gravity".

At one point in her Top Hat set, MARIS took phones from fans, saying, "FaceTime your loved ones who couldn't be here tonight." While holding those calls, she started to sing "Missing Me."

"She loves the interaction with the crowd, she is loving every minute they are giving back," MARIS' grandmother, Pat Towndrow, said.

Towndrow, who has attended many of her granddaughter's shows, said none of them compare to her earliest performances.

"When she was about 3 years old, she put on some calypso music and MARIS danced," Towndrow said. "[later]she even sang 'The Star-Spangled Banner' at Dodgers Stadium. I have watched that video 40 times, and I still get goosebumps."

From on-stage props to mid-track voiceovers, MARIS' hometown energy gave fans what they hoped for.

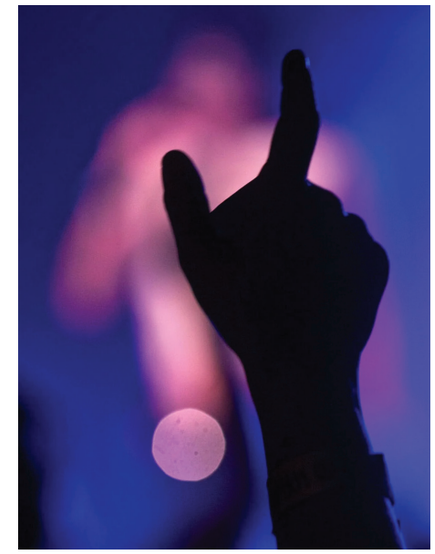
"It's hard to see the little hometown girl become a pop star, it's the sweetest thing," Towndrow said.



MARIS holds phones from the crowd on Nov. 10. MARIS kept the phones for a full song, even poking fun at some fans for callers hanging up.



MARIS sings to the crowd at the Top Hat.



A fan in the crowd waves along to a MARIS song.