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Montana Kaimin: Special Section, April 12, 2002

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S p e c i a l S e c t i o n

MONTANA KAIMIN

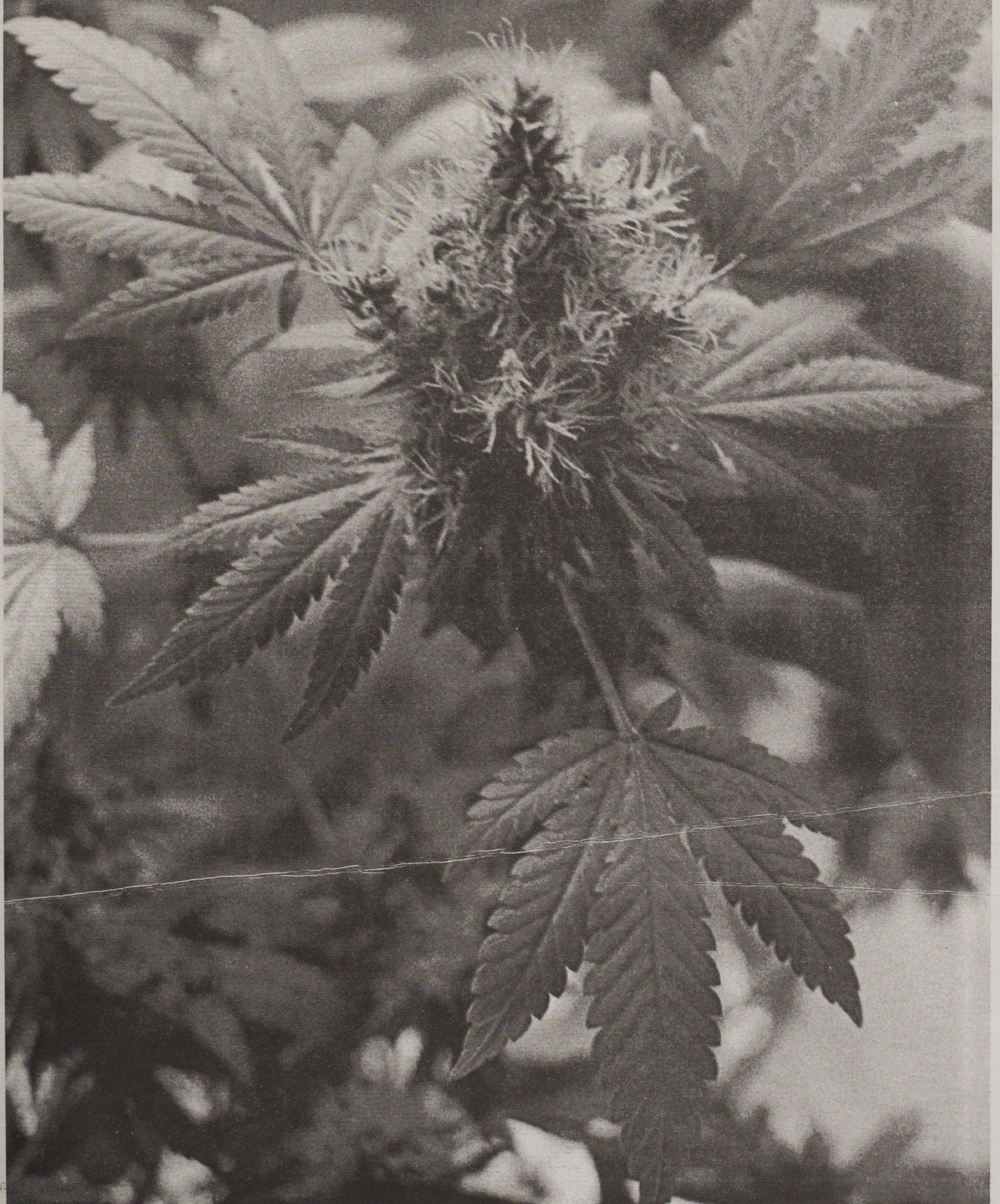
F r i d a y

April 12, 2002

Kaimin is a Salish word for paper

Drugs and UM

From E to Ritalin, weed to cocaine — a glimpse
into the use, misuse and abuse of drugs



SPECIAL SECTION: DRUGS AND UM

Letter from the editor

Just say yes to educating yourself about the substances out there and how they can affect you

"Yeah, I tried it once in college, but I didn't inhale."

The old adage: "Once in college."

It's almost written in our contracts when we enroll:

I, Joe Student, promise to study hard, develop emotionally, physically and intellectually, learn to be a responsible adult, all while testing my irresponsibility and I, Joe Student, promise to experiment with everything, including substances.

Whether we like to admit it or not, most of us will experiment with alcohol or drugs during our college careers. Granted, as the Curry Health Center survey points out, we think we do more than we actually do, but studies reveal that college students use more than even our peers who do not attend college.

We have to know what we're up against — what's out there, what's dangerous, how it can affect our bodies, our minds, our relationships, our GPAs and our futures.

That is why we at the Kaimin chose to devote a special section to the use and abuse of drugs. The staff decided on the topic because we've seen the impact the issue has had on campus and the continuing buzz

about college students and substance abuse.

In these pages, you'll find stories ranging from a group of friends who started experimenting with cocaine and saw it affect their relationships, to a breakdown of what it means to misuse prescriptions. We attempt to show glimpses into the lives of those who use and how experimenting or using drugs has affected their lives.

As you will notice, most of the sources in these stories have been given first-name pseudonyms. Normally Kaimin policy discourages the use of anonymous sources, but in this case, because of the sensitive nature of the interviews, we had to bend our own rules to get to the heart of the stories we're telling.

We're not aiming to glorify or condemn. We're not encouraging or chiding. We want to emphasize that whether drug use is recreational or not, some people emerge "unscathed," as Mike Frost, Self Over Substances coordinator, said, while others come away with real problems. Remember, what you do now, in what could be called the second-coming of your formative phase, will set patterns for the way you live after you step out of academia. Sometimes, "Just once, in college" can turn into much more.

So read, enjoy, ingest, contemplate and above all, learn.

— Courtney Lowery

UM drug prevention aims to help, educate

Curry Health Center survey shows drug use on campus is less common than students imagine

Chris Rodkey
Montana Kaimin

Students at UM may think their campus is a constant party-in-progress, but studies from the Curry Health Center show that students believe their peers are drinking and using drugs more than they actually are.

The study is one of the preventative measures that UM takes not only to help people who have substance abuse issues, but to let students know that most of them don't have abuse problems, said Sarah Mart, coordinator of the health enhancement program at the CHC.

"While sometimes it's easy to focus on the people who have substance problems, it's also important to acknowledge those who behave responsibly and have healthy behaviors," Mart said.

Using data gathered from random classes at UM, the survey found students believe that 40 percent of students used illicit drugs one or more days in the last month, while only 3 percent of students actually reported drug use.

Mart said that it's important to let students know how few of them actually use substances.

"It's not a matter of scaring the daylights out of people," Mart said. "We work to encourage healthy behavior before it gets bad."

Mike Frost, counselor and Self Over Substances coordinator, said freshman year is the time when students are most likely to abuse drugs, with a decline in the following years of college. Also, more college students use substances than their non-

university counterparts of the same age, he said, because college offers a time of newfound freedom with few responsibilities.

However, of the few students he counsels at Curry for drug abuse, not many, if any, are true addicts. Most students who use drugs do it only occasionally, on weekends and at parties. Still, Frost stressed that no matter how little a person uses, it sets up a pattern that can live on for the rest of a person's life.

Enter Self Over Substance intervention, which Frost said helps people learn from their mistakes and prevents them from becoming repeat offenders.

"We punish people with education rather than punitively," Frost said. SOS is a program that students are typically referred to when they are written up for substance violations on campus. Students pay to participate in the program, which teaches them how to figure out their drug and alcohol problems for themselves.

Students do not have to be referred to attend the program, and some do it voluntarily.

"(SOS) is really respectful of where people are at in their lives," Frost said.

Fifty-six students were referred to SOS last fall, and Frost said the repeat offender rate for students who complete the program is very low.

Remember, if you need help, or you think a friend may need help with drug abuse, there are resources on campus.

For emergency counseling help, call the 24-hour crisis line at 243-6559.

For more information about the Self Over Substance program, call 243-4711.

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Special credit and thanks to Jessie Childress, Tracy Whitehair, Olivia Nisbet and Tiffany Aldinger. Cover photo by Josh Parker.



Montana Kaimin

Our 104th
Year

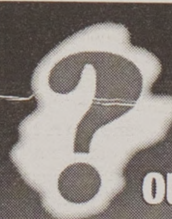
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out of 5 Montana young adults
don't drink and drive.*

Answer:

4

MOST of us
www.mostofus.org

PREVENT DRINKING AND DRIVING.

*Data Source: November 2001 Montana Adult Alcohol Phone Survey (Age 21 to 34 / n=1,000)
Any amount of alcohol can be illegal or dangerous.

Project funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

SPECIAL SECTION: DRUGS AND UM

Cocaine: 'It seeps right into your soul'

One of the most addictive drugs, cocaine, has become more visible in Missoula over the last few years.

A group of friends shares its experiences with 'blow'

Jessie Childress
Montana Kaimin

When asked if he thinks his cocaine use is experimentation or part of his lifestyle, Justin sinks deeper into the couch. He seems to shrink into his hooded sweatshirt and waits 13 seconds before answering quietly, "It's in the lifestyle for me and a couple other people. Now, saying it to you, it scares the hell out of me."

It's the addiction, or the possibility of addiction, that scares him, and there's good reason. Cocaine is the No. 1 cause for admission into drug treatment programs in major U.S. cities. Laboratory animals, if given an unlimited supply, will dose themselves to death.

"It's the way it takes precedence over everything like an addiction — goddamn, it is addictive," Justin said. "You don't think it is, it doesn't seem like it when you start. But it seeps right into your soul."

The demons Justin is battling are common among the relatively small number of UM students — 2.5 percent of the student body, according to the 2000 UM Student Health Needs Key Findings — who use cocaine.

The appeal of the expensive white powder is obvious enough: More hours in the day, more energy and the sense of better social skills — not to mention the euphoria that comes with the high. Yet the dangers are just as clear, and student users report a constant battle between what they want to do in the moment and what they know is ultimately good for them.

"At the end of the day when you've been working for 16 hours and you want to go out and party, a couple rails (lines of cocaine) and you're ready to go for another eight hours," said Erik, a UM student.

Erik and a group of eight friends started out using cocaine at parties, but soon found that their use became more and more frequent.

"Once our entire group started to get into it, everybody around us started to do it and it was there all the time," he said. "You couldn't go somewhere and have it not be there."

After a while, it wasn't just used for partying either. It was easier to do lots of things with the help of cocaine, and it crept into more and more activities.

"It started to get to a point where it was like, 'Oh, maybe I'll take some and go do chores or tasks on campus,'" Erik said. "And that started to strike me as something that was wrong."

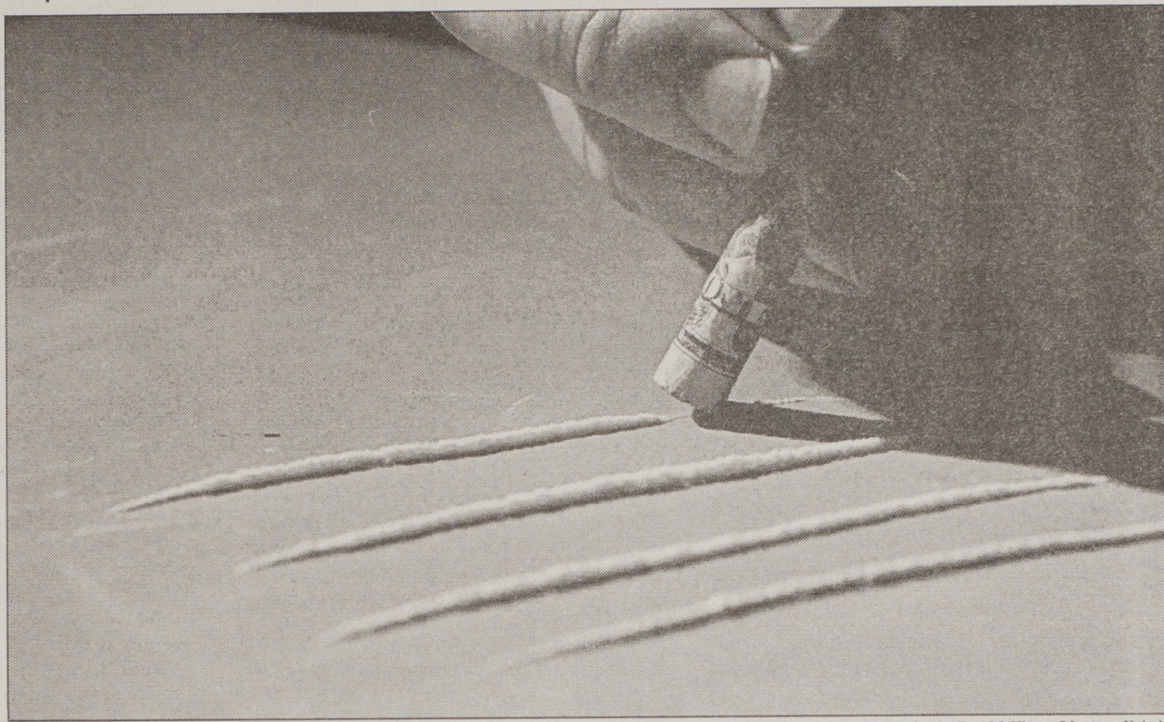
After a couple months of solid use, in which Erik said he alone spent \$150 to \$200 each week, the group decided it had to stop.

"We decided as a collective one night that it was bad and that we were going to quit," Erik said. "When everybody's doing it at the same time, it ends up that everybody's doing it all the time, so we kind of all had to have a consensus that we weren't going to do it. It was either not hang out with anybody, or everybody quits doing this."

And so they did. Erik said he stays away from cocaine altogether now, though some of his friends still use it when it comes around. He said cocaine is horribly addictive while you're doing it — you want more and you want it badly. After a few days without it, the urge lessens. Erik said he can stay away from it, but when it's put in front of him, it's hard to turn down.

"I could go on with life and not even look back," Erik said. "It's just that when it's there in front of you it's difficult. And that's something you carry with you for the rest of your life."

Justin, one of Erik's friends, agreed that once you have a taste for cocaine, it stays



Cocaine powder can be snorted and almost immediately causes a euphoric, energetic high. Cocaine is highly addictive and prolonged use can damage users' hearts and nasal passages. Cocaine can also be smoked as "crack," or injected.

with you.

"I use it whenever it's around," Justin said. "If it's there, you do it. That's part of the way it changes your personality once you start doing it. It takes precedence over everything else, and if you can spend money on cocaine, you will."

Justin doesn't think he's addicted.

When he's out of town, on a trip or vacation, he says he doesn't even think about it and it doesn't matter. The day-to-day, though, is harder to judge.

Cocaine's appeal is strong to some; the sheer volume of energy a user gets, a sense that you are capable of anything and everything, and the transformation into an excited social creature draws many toward it.

"It's incredibly fun," Justin said. "There are times when you're so high and it's pretty damn euphoric. On top of that, your mind's racing, you're having good conversations with friends."

Erik said he believes he goes through a social transformation on cocaine.

"It makes you much more socially acceptable, and aware, and out there," he said. "That's always fun to have, to just be a social butterfly and go out there. I think that everybody in some way would enjoy having that ability."

John, another friend, cited these advantages also, but said there is a crack in the magic.

"On coke, you're talking to your closest friends and you're having good conversations," he said, "but I always leave with this pit in my stomach after I'm done talking to them because I want more coke and I want it to keep going but it slips away."

Justin said that despite the fun, he has seen bad social effects of cocaine. While he feels closer to his friends, in the back of his mind he said he realizes it's the drug that is causing this.

"It hurts you at the same time (as you are having fun)," he said, "because you're going about it the wrong way."

He also said that the politics of drugs can cause tensions and problems in otherwise untainted friendships. Issues like who is paying for the cocaine and who is doing how much of it begin entering into the picture.

"It can hurt your friendship at the same time it is helping it," Justin said. "Somebody will buy a bunch and nobody else has any

money and they won't say anything, but in the back of their mind they're saying, 'this motherfucker owes me.'"

Erik said that though he tried to keep money out of the equation, it is bound to figure in.

"Tensions get brought up in all kinds of ways," he said. "If you're doing (cocaine) with somebody a lot, spending money with somebody a lot, oftentimes even good friends will have issues come up."

He said, though, that this phenomenon is not unique to cocaine. He's seen it with other people and other drugs like marijuana.

Law enforcement is something most drug users are concerned with. Being caught with cocaine could result in a loss of student loans and grants, and a loss of public housing, not to mention jail time.

Sgt. Geron Wade of the Missoula Police Department said cocaine is around in Missoula and they keep an eye out for it.

"There is definitely a number of people out there using it," he said.

However, he thinks more people in Missoula do methamphetamines than cocaine and meth is more of a priority for his department, he said.

Everyone interviewed for this story said they get their cocaine through someone they know and trust, and they only have one source. This allays their fears somewhat, they said, though they are still cautious and they worry.

"I don't have dreams of people breaking into my house and killing me," Justin said, "but I think about it. I'm paranoid, especially when (cocaine) is around. I feel uncomfortable about my house and its security."

Erik said he doesn't worry too much about getting caught, but he and his friends didn't feel safe when two of them bought and sold an ounce of cocaine each. He said it brought more danger than just using cocaine because of the increased contact with people outside their trusted circle.

Evidence shows that while the occasional use of small amounts of cocaine is not damaging to most people's health, chronic use or larger doses is proven to harm users. Snorting cocaine with any regularity damages the nasal passages and the heart muscle, and a suppressed appetite caused by coke use can lead to malnutrition. Additionally, some people have allergic reactions to cocaine that can result in sud-

den death, and cocaine is often cut with poisonous substances like detergent.

Despite this, the cocaine users interviewed brush these effects aside in favor of the perceived benefits.

"It's a dangerous drug. It's a very delicate thing to play with," Erik said. "How I justify it to myself is there are a lot of things that are bad for your health and I do them anyway."

"It's the experience versus the damage," he said. "If the experience is worth it to you, it means that you're saying essentially 'I am hurting my body and I am shortening my life for a life experience.' I would have to say that using it a few times is worth it."

Marcus is another cocaine user and UM student, though not in the same group of friends as Erik and Justin. He said that though he knows about the negative health effects of cocaine, he rarely thinks about them.

"Health risks have never mattered to me; you feel like you're invincible when you're my age," he said. "Right now it's just one of those things, where, you know, I feel I can do whatever I want. And it doesn't occur to me that I can't because it seems so harmless."

Marcus said that he and his circle of friends have done cocaine on the average of once a week for the past year. In the two years before, he did it 15 to 20 times each year. He said he upped his usage when he turned 21.

"I started hanging out at the bars a lot more," he said, "and a lot of my friends were getting it on Friday nights and Saturday nights and then you'd save some for Sunday mornings. Pretty soon, it's like, 'well, we've got to call the guy again because next weekend's coming.'"

Marcus said he "kind of" sees it as a fixture in his life, but he doesn't think he's addicted and thinks he never will be.

"I never want to be addicted to cocaine, or any other drug for that matter," he said, "but cocaine is the drug I do that's the most likely to produce a severe addiction."

He claims there is one basic reason why he'll never be addicted.

"I just don't have enough money to be a coke addict," he said. "If I did have the money, who's to say what I'd be doing. Hopefully, I plan to keep myself poor enough to stay clean."

SPECIAL SECTION: DRUGS AND UM

The good, the bad of dealing the goods

Ex-drug dealers reveal their means and methods of transporting illegal drugs

Brian Alterowitz
for the Kaimin

Ironically, Chuck looks like a drug dealer.

He is tall, thin and wears expensive clothing. What's ironic is that he doesn't deal drugs anymore and hasn't for years, he said. At least, not on the scale that he used to — not for a living.

Chuck isn't his real name. Truth be told, the name he goes by isn't his real name either, but to get him to talk about dealing drugs, he wanted a pseudonym for his pseudonym.

It's hardly a surprise that a drug dealer would be concerned about anonymity. While possession of most substances tends to draw relatively mild sanctions, dealing can result in a life sentence. Dealers are the unforgiven, the undefended, the ones whose activities draw universal condemnation. Yet whatever one might think about the morality of the trade, dealers are an integral part of the drug world at UM and elsewhere — and the ways in which they operate are rarely explored.

When Chuck dealt drugs, he did so in quantity and variety.

"It's much more effective to ask what I didn't deal than what I did," he said.

Chuck used to deal in a major city, though he wouldn't say which one. Because drugs were a bigger problem there than they are in Missoula, he had to develop shrewd ways to avoid being caught by the police.

The first thing he did was educate himself about drug laws. The amount of information freely available at libraries and bookstores is amazing, he said.

"While my girlfriend was checking out home gardening tips, I was researching how to smuggle marijuana across state lines," he said.

By researching the law, Chuck found out which drugs carried the stiffest sentences (LSD, cocaine and heroin) and how much he could carry without it becoming a felony (typically, less than a gram).

"Any good dealer plans on being arrested every single time he leaves his house," he said.

When dealing, Chuck would bring along supplies to avoid being caught. One trick he used for transporting small amounts of drugs was to keep them in balloons coated with glycerin because they are easier to swallow that way, he said.

For transporting large amounts of drugs, Chuck would find hard-to-reach places in his car to store the contraband.

"There are millions, and I mean millions, of places to hide

drugs in a car. I know guys who had an extra alternator installed to store drugs," he said.

Drug dealers tend not to be drug users, Chuck said, at least not while they are doing business. The stupidest thing a dealer can do is get high before a deal, he said.

"Drugs can make you move and react much faster," he said. "Unfortunately, they make your synapses fire about as fast as Troglodyte the Cave-Boy."

Given the risks involved, dealing drugs seems like a fool's game, but given the money that can be made, it becomes more understandable. Chuck made more money in the year he sold drugs than in the last six years combined, he said.

Greg stands at the other end of the drug dealer spectrum.

He grew his own marijuana for more than a year — in a closet at his father's house. Because he only grew about an ounce each month, and because he paid for the power bill, he didn't make much profit, he said.

"The lights, the soil and the pots cost about \$300 in initial outlay, and there was about \$100 each month to pay for the power bills," he said.

Greg only sold what he didn't use, and then only sold to his friends. The money he made went to pay for the costs of growing the drug. One thing he has in common with Chuck is an extensive knowledge of drug laws — another is a number of tricks to avoid being caught.

When Greg carried drugs, he would carry them in a bag of something with a strong smell, like chocolate, he said. He used the same trick when he shipped drugs, shipping them in cans of coffee to disrupt the smell. In addition, he wouldn't use the post office to ship the drugs.

"I used FedEx and Postal Express because they don't give a damn what you ship through the mail," he said.

While these companies may inspect packages more thoroughly now than when Greg mailed packages, Greg's tactics must have worked; he was never caught. In fact, to the best of his knowledge, he was never really suspected.

Security was also important to Greg. The only people who got caught were the ones who dealt to people they didn't know, he said.

"Through most of the time I was growing it, there was only three to four people that knew," he said.

Perhaps because of luck, perhaps because of skill, neither Greg nor Chuck has ever had to serve time for dealing drugs. Greg eventually moved to Missoula and became a student and Chuck eventually became an employee in the service industry. Both lead normal lives, at least as normal as anyone else. Dealing drugs, while a facet of their personalities is no longer the dominant one.

Caught in the act on campus

What happens when the law steps in

Bryan O'Connor
Montana Kaimin

The repercussions of selling or using drugs on campus can end a student's academic career — or it can serve as an educational experience, say campus administrators.

Ron Brunell, residence life director at UM, and his staff are responsible for dealing with students who disobey the student conduct code in the residence halls. Drug dealing and possession of drugs are common violations of the code.

"I try and impress upon students why they are here," Brunell said. "The use of substances doesn't enhance their experience here."

In his 30 years at UM, Brunell said, he thinks alcohol use has remained about the same but marijuana use is rising among students. This is something he sees as a problem.

"There's a high correlation between academic performance and substance abuse," Brunell said.

Drug dealing is less common than drug possession at UM, Brunell said, but it still happens. He said there are usually five or fewer students caught dealing on campus each year. The penalties are stiff for those who are.

"If the evidence against them is definitive," Brunell said, "I believe they don't belong in this (campus) community."

Drug violations are handled on a case-by-case basis, but Brunell said he recommends suspension for students caught dealing. The more common offense of possession of drugs or paraphernalia usually means students will have to attend the Self Over Substances program at the Curry Health Center.

Last semester, there were 64 drug violations of the student conduct code at UM and 56 students were referred to SOS. Mike Frost, SOS coordinator at UM, said the program is meant to be educational, not a punishment. By giving students information, they can make more informed decisions, he said.

"The focus of our work is to identify their risk factors," Frost said. "That way they can sort out their priorities."

Most of the students who violate the drug code at UM are also put on disciplinary probation. Charles Couture, dean of students at UM, said this means students could be suspended or expelled if they get into more trouble. He also said it could include other sanctions, like handing in academic progress reports to him or Brunell.

"Most students violate the code only one time," Couture said. "It's those few repeat offenders who cause the most disruptions in normal univer-

Hard Time

Getting caught with drugs by Public Safety is one thing. Getting caught by the police off campus is a different matter. Here's a partial list of what offenders could face.

Misdemeanor criminal possession of dangerous drugs (first offense):

Marijuana (less than 60 grams) or hashish (less than one gram)

• \$100 - \$500 fine and up to six months in county jail

Anabolic steroids

• \$100 - \$500 fine and up to six months in county jail

Opiates (heroin and related substances)

• up to \$50,000 fine and two to five years in state prison

All other drugs

• up to \$50,000 fine and up to five years in state prison

Criminal possession with intent to distribute:

Opiates

• up to \$50,000 fine and two to 20 years in state prison

All other drugs

• up to \$50,000 fine and up to 20 years in state prison

Criminal distribution of dangerous drugs:

Narcotics, opiates

• up to \$50,000 fine and two years to life in prison

Marijuana

• up to \$50,000 fine and one year to life in prison

sity operations."

The process of justice on campus is somewhat different than the state or federal system. Students who are caught with drugs or paraphernalia or dealing drugs are charged with general misconduct, and they face an investigation by the school. An investigative officer will make a recommendation for the sanctions to be placed on the students, then inform them.

At that point, Couture said, the students can either admit wrongdoing and accept the sanctions or deny the charges.

"Ninety-nine percent plus of all cases are handled at the first stage," Couture said.

But if students feel they are wrongly accused or being punished unjustly, they can request an administrative conference. The conference will usually include the student, Brunell or Couture and sometimes a witness. If a solution is still not reached, the student can make an appeal to go before the university court.

Couture said there are usually three to six incidents a year that go all the way to the university court. He said the term "court" is somewhat misleading; it is a hearing in front of two faculty members, one staff member, three students and one graduate student.

The student can present evidence and witnesses to the committee to appeal an accusation or a sanction. The committee asks questions and goes into private deliberation, then offers a written decision.

"They can say a finding is incorrect," Couture said, "or they can uphold it. They can reduce a sanction or even increase it."

The decision is then sent to the president of the university for final approval or overrule.

As far as drug dealing, Couture said, each individual case must be evaluated and there are no hard and fast rules about punishment, but it generally involves suspension or expulsion. Of the students who are suspended for a year or more, few ever come back, he said.

Another repercussion from using or dealing drugs is the possible loss of financial aid for a student.

Question 35 on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid asks if the applicant has been convicted of possession or selling drugs. Only state or federal convictions after a person turns 18 count against him or her. The penalty for providing false information on the form is a \$20,000 fine, an unspecified prison sentence, or both.

Mick Hanson, director of financial aid at UM, said it is up to students to report their convictions, and he encourages them to do so. But he also said it is not his office's job to verify that students have been truthful on the application.

"We're not going to go out and look for trouble," Hanson said.

Hanson did say he believed the Department of Education had an audit system for catching students who fib on the application. He said fewer than 10 students per semester at UM self-report on their financial aid applications.

When students report their offenses, they face a one-year loss of federal aid for the first possession, two years for a second offense and indefinite loss of aid for a third offense.

Dealing drugs brings a two-year suspension of financial aid for the first offense and an indefinite suspension for the second offense.

Hanson said these violations do not necessarily prohibit a student from receiving other types of financial aid. Students can also get their federal aid reinstated if they go through an accredited substance abuse program. Until last semester, one did not exist in Montana.

Hanson said he worked with Turning Point in Missoula to craft a program that was acceptable under the Department of Education's standards.

"There wasn't a problem with the educational part of the program," Hanson said. "They just needed to include unannounced drug tests to fulfill the requirements."

SPECIAL SECTION: DRUGS AND UM

Digging up weed in the Garden City

Pot patrons tell of busts, growing operations and their yearnings for legalization

Liam Gallagher
Montana Kaimin

Six years ago Jon started smoking pot.

A year later he was selling it and some days, he and a partner would sell as much as a pound. He was making about \$500 a week.

Three years ago he moved to Missoula, started dealing and eventually made a name for himself.

Last December, Jon went to meet a friend and his buddy at a local park. He had four pounds of pot in his car and he was asking \$3,050 a pound.

He never sold the pot, he never saw the money and he's never seen his friend since.

Jon's friend's buddy was an undercover cop. Before Jon knew it he was surrounded by six cop cars, thrown to the ground, arrested and taken to jail.

The bust that Jon was a part of netted the Missoula police about 40 pounds of pot and tens of thousands of dollars in cash. Jon was just one of several busted in connection with the drugs but he decided not to leak the names of other dealers.

He said he's pretty sure he would've gotten off if he had ratted the others out but he refused to give the names of those he'd been working with.

On April 23, Jon will be sentenced. He expects that it will land him three to four months in jail. But that's a sentence he's willing to accept, because unlike those who gave Jon's name to the police, Jon has been able to stay in Missoula since his arrest.

"All the rats I've ever known have to leave," Jon said.

For Jon, not being able to live in Missoula would be more of a punishment than the time he'll serve in Deer Lodge. He has a lot of good friends in town and doesn't plan on leaving until the court orders him to.

During the last four months a lot of questions have bounced around in Jon's head. He's questioned his own actions, the actions of the police and of his so-called friends. But most frequently, he's questioned the nature of the laws he's now subject to. Like a growing number of people in Montana and around the country, he thinks pot should be legal.

"It's just ridiculous," Jon said. "It's just herb."

It's no secret that marijuana is easy to come by in Missoula and that there are others who share Jon's sentiment.

And the Missoula police recognize that.

"It's a significant problem, I mean we see it more than any other drug," said

Missoula police Sgt. Geron Wade.

Wade said there are a number of factors that contribute to Missoula's marijuana problem, including: the freeway that runs alongside town, providing drug traffickers with easy travel to and from town; the university, which brings in thousands of college students; and Missoula's close proximity to Canada and its cannabis.

Wade said most of the pot in town is brought across the border from our neighbors to the north.

"There is some produced here, but not the quality that you see coming in," Wade said. "Usually British Columbia is where we get a lot of the good stuff now."

Chris, a UM junior and avid pot smoker, would beg to differ.

Since November he's been the proud grower of four pot plants, one of which has already been harvested. The plants are growing in the closet of his one-bedroom apartment. It was his third shot at horticulture of this variety and the first to prove successful without much difficulty.

"We basically started them under our desk lamp lights," Chris said.

Chris undertook the project with a friend and the two have lovingly cared for their plants ever since.

Surprisingly, it hasn't been that much work.

"We spend a lot of time just looking at them, just watching them develop," Chris said. "How many hours, I don't know. It's just so much fun time."

Just how easy has it been?

"Super easy," Chris said.

"It's a weed; it's meant to thrive. I mean, given the right climate you can just throw out a seed and it'll start growing."

Chris and his friend didn't quite just drop a seed in soil, but both agree that it's been much easier than most would imagine.

And the cost of growing the plants hasn't set the two back much either. All-in-all they estimate that the supplies, from lights to soil, cost about \$125 and were bought at a plant shop in Missoula.

In the end, they estimate the plants will produce between \$1,500 and \$1,600 worth of pot, but they said they have no plans to sell any of their crop.

Chris has smoked pot since his sophomore year in high school and tried growing it several times in the last few years. In the past, he said, everything from his parents to pests have kept his plants from producing.

He said the thought of getting in trouble has crossed his mind, but never particularly worried him.

"Yeah, you definitely think



Josh Parker/Montana Kaimin

Marijuana can be smoked using a number of different types of paraphernalia.

about the consequences and what would happen if you get caught, but once you start, you're committed," he said.

This also seemed to be the case with Jon and his business ventures with pot.

"It's not something I ever wanted to do, I just knew people," Jon said. "I knew the people to get it from and I knew the people to sell it to."

Both Jon and Chris, like many other pot patrons, feel strongly that marijuana should be decriminalized.

"The whole thing is I just wish it was legal," Jon said.

Jon is not alone his beliefs.

Over the last three decades marijuana has made its way into the mainstream by way of its medical uses. In recent years, a few states across the nation have established laws that allow medical use of marijuana.

In California, voters passed a medical marijuana initiative in 1996 that allows for doctors to give "written or oral" recommendations to their patients to use marijuana to treat everything from arthritis to epilepsy.

Since then, several states have followed in the California's footsteps and passed similar legislation.

The use of marijuana as medicine is an issue of heated debate and has prompted the creation of pro-pot groups from Oregon to Ohio. Montana has its own chapter of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, or NORML, which has offices across the state.

In its mission statement Montana's NORML says it believes that "criminal prosecution of otherwise law-abiding marijuana users is wasteful, misguided and unjust. We believe that responsible adults should have the right to cultivate, possess and consume marijuana at their discretion ..."

But, with two new Drug Enforcement Administration



Josh Parker/Montana Kaimin

Flowering buds from marijuana plants must be clipped and dried before they can be smoked.

agents setting up shop in town and the possibility of Missoula being designated as a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area — which would subsequently create a 14-member drug task force — it doesn't look like marijuana will become legal any time soon in Montana.

This comes as discouraging news for many like Jon and Chris who'd argue pot use is not a problem that needs that kind of enforcement.

"As far as I'm concerned, that's part of the economy here," Jon said. "People make money and they put it back into the community. I never saved money, I bought shit,

like dinner."

Although Jon may be unsure just where the coming months and years will take him, he's sure of one thing: pot has its place in Missoula and more enforcement won't mean less drugs.

"You know what I want to say is if it's not me that's selling it, it's someone else, who is probably meaner and sketchier," he said.

And even Sgt. Wade recognizes that.

"It's always a problem, I mean there's a supply there and you take down somebody that's selling five pounds and it still doesn't really impact the supply."

SPECIAL SECTION: DRUGS AND UM

Hallucinogens and tripping in today's world

Jessie Childress
Montana Kaimin

If one were to judge the existence of a drug by what's covered in the media, one might think that LSD and psilocybin mushrooms didn't even exist in this day and age.

They've been relegated to the decade of the 1960s, lost in the reminiscing and flashbacks of hippies who long ago gave up drug use and took day jobs.

Occasionally, they appear in movies about a new generation of drug users, but even then they take the backseat to newly popular drugs like Ecstasy, familiar ones like alcohol and marijuana and high-profile drugs like cocaine.

Most of this lack of attention is justified; after receiving much attention in the '60s because of popular followings for Timothy Leary's home-crafted religion, the League of Spiritual Discovery (note the acronym), the popularity and use of hallucinogens has dropped steadily. Health surveys like UM's Student Health Needs Key Findings don't even include them in their statistics.

Because of this, and because those who do use hallucinogens are generally found only in subculture circles, use and abuse of hallucinogens is difficult to judge.

People in Missoula who use hallucinogens can definitely be found, but it is hard to estimate where their experiences fit in.

Alan, a 21-year-old UM student, said he's probably taken LSD 50 times and psilocybin mushrooms six times over the past four years. He said LSD, or acid, is his favorite drug.

"I love the massive amounts of creativity that your mind spews forth," he said. "And the way you interact with other people who you do it with. It's eight hours of just complete, insane laughter."

He said he buys it whenever he can find it, probably every other month or so, and takes it with friends.

Alan said he sees one drawback to using acid — it can take up a lot of time. A dose of acid can last anywhere from six to 12 hours depending on the amount taken. Users report that mushrooms are generally shorter-acting and less intense than LSD.

Some users do experience negative effects like "bad trips," in which they may become very scared or disoriented. Other effects could include panic attacks or long-term flashbacks where the user may have hallucinations years after taking LSD.

Steven, 21, said he's tried hallucinogens a number of times and said one must be cautious in using them.

"To really enjoy (hallucinogens) you can't give in, you can't be weak," he said. "If your mind breaks and you give up and lose control, acid is dangerous. If you can't handle it, don't do it. And that's how most people are — they can't handle it so they don't do it."

He said hallucinogens can be scary because many people aren't prepared to lose their grips on reality, and when things look and feel different than they know they really are, it can throw users into a confused and scared state.

David, a 21-year-old UM student who said he's tried "bunches" of hallucinogens, including mescaline 2CB, mushrooms and ketamine, and has taken LSD dozens of times, said hallucinogens have changed

his life.

"LSD allows you to think about yourself and the world in ways that most people normally never experience," David said. "I've been able to analyze my personal motivations, understand my relationships with others, re-live past experiences — and that's just the tip of the iceberg."

David said he uses drugs with moderation and said that while moderation may be difficult to maintain with a highly addictive drug like cocaine or methamphetamine, it is not difficult to do with hallucinogens like LSD or mushrooms. If LSD is taken every day, tolerance develops in three or four days and the drug becomes totally ineffective. Tolerance is similar in other hallucinogens like psilocybin and mescaline.



Alan drops a hit of acid from a vial onto a sugar cube. A vial typically holds about a hundred hits of acid.

Mike Cohea/Montana Kaimin

Alan said the chance of being caught using drugs doesn't figure into his use.

"I don't worry about law enforcement," he said. "I'm not paranoid about it. It doesn't figure in morally to my decisions."

He also said drug use is a very individual thing, and people should be careful when using any drug.

"If I'm going to do a drug, I'm gonna read about it," he said. "I'm gonna find out about it. Before you do anything, you want to know what the hell it is."

He added one more thing.

"Drugs aren't made for everybody," he said. "Just because I like eating hallucinogens doesn't mean I think that everybody should do it. In fact, I don't even think half the population should do it."

'Pharming:' College students and prescription drugs

Courtney Lowery
Montana Kaimin

Ritalin. Klonopin. Zoloft.

Jenna saw all of them go up her roommates' noses.

The UM senior was studying abroad with a group of American students. Before they would go out to clubs, her roommates would crush the drugs and snort them.

The drugs are easier to get than street drugs like cocaine and heroin and, if snorted, can induce a euphoria similar to the one created by illicit drugs.

There's no specific way to gauge the non-medical usage of prescription drugs, or "pharming," among college students either in Missoula or in the nation, but one thing is for certain, experts say: it's more than just a fad.

"It's integrated into student culture," said Dr. Eric Heiligenstein, clinical director of psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin Health Services.

"It's easy for it to be behind the scenes because you don't have to go to a bad part of town to get it. It's at your roommate's door, all you have to do is knock," said Heiligenstein, one of the nation's leading authorities on recreational use of prescription drugs, especially Ritalin.

Prescription drug abuse is hardly a new phenomenon.

Generations of students have snatched their mothers' Valium (a sedative), or perhaps their fathers' Dexedrine (a diet pill and an amphetamine).

Barbiturates such as Secanol and Quaaludes, as well as pain medications such as Vicodin, have long been subject to so much abuse that pharmacies and doctors treat them with special care.

But the proliferation of new types of pharmaceuticals has inevitably led to new forms of abuse. Oxycontin, a powerful new painkiller, can produce such a powerful high when smoked or snorted that drug dealers have taken to robbing pharmacies to get their hands on it. Anti-anxiety medications like Klonopin and Xanax have an appeal powerful enough that President Bush's niece was arrested trying to procure Xanax with a fake prescription.

A 1998 National Institute on Drug Abuse study reported that the most dramatic increase in new users of prescription drugs for non-medical purposes occurs in people 12 to 25 years old. Within this age group, the use of barbiturates, tranquilizers and narcotics other than heroin — which had been steadily decreasing since the early 1990s — began to increase in the mid- to late-'90s.

Abuse of Ritalin, which is prescribed to help people with attention deficit disorder to focus better, is causing perhaps the most alarm among college health professionals. The drug can have a speed-like or euphoric effect when ground up and snorted. The Drug Enforcement Agency has even named it one of the agency's "drugs for concern."

Heiligenstein first took note of the "Ritalin Racket," as it's been called, about four years ago, when student patients of his started coming in and telling him and his staff that friends were asking for their Ritalin.

"At that point, we knew something was going on," he said. "It had quickly become something normal. It wasn't just a fringe phenomenon."

Heiligenstein and other experts speculate that the phenomenon took hold in the mid-'90s, most likely in the East Coast prep schools.

At first, it started as a way for students to help themselves to a drug that could help them academically, by enhancing concentration. But experimentation with snorting produced a feeling of euphoria comparable to cocaine or other narcotics. As Heiligenstein points out, when it is snorted, it produces a rapid absorption, putting more of the substance into the bloodstream, producing the high.

Typically, users only snort the drug when they are looking for a high.

Availability is what attracts many Ritalin abusers. It's relatively cheap, sometimes even free from friends, and is easily accessible.

Although it is illegal to misuse a prescription, either someone else's or your own, prescriptions don't carry the negative connotation that street drugs do. Experts say prescriptions don't carry the guilt factor that illegal drugs

do, making the usage that much easier.

But how do you combat the almost mythical misuse of a drug?

Heiligenstein and his staff was the first on-campus health service to implement "risk-management" policies to carefully monitor the prescriptions of Ritalin.

"One lost prescription and sadly, that's it," he said. There is no such thing as re-issuing a prescription of Ritalin at UW-Madison.

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SPECIAL SECTION: DRUGS AND UM

Methamphetamine: Dirty and dangerous

Missoula police say, marijuana aside, meth is the biggest drug problem around

Jessie Childress
Montana Kaimin

Two in 1999. Five in 2000. Seventeen in 2001. And that's just Flathead County.

Seizures of methamphetamine labs in Montana are increasing, and it appears the end is nowhere in sight.

Sgt. Geron Wade of the Missoula Police Department said methamphetamine is a major problem.

"Methamphetamine would be the largest problem," he said, "not including marijuana. Our primary focus, in our department, is the street-level use of methamphetamine and manufacturing."

He said that the department focuses on methamphetamine because of how dangerous it is.

"It makes the user or abuser more paranoid, more dangerous when they're using methamphetamine than any other type of drug," Wade said.

He said that the drug is often linked to many other types of problems or crime, and the police want to reduce its effect on the local community.

"A lot of times we'll find we will make an arrest for methamphetamine sale and manufacture and the same people involved in that are also involved in check forgeries and car break-ins and things like that," he said. "They've got to get the money somewhere, and if they don't have the money they steal it."

Methamphetamine is a stimulant related to amphetamine that has very strong effects on the nervous system. It can be taken in pills, snorted, injected or smoked. Users become euphoric and energetic, but can also become very anxious, paranoid and violent, especially as use continues or increases. Methamphetamine, known on the street as "speed" or "meth," or in smokable form as "ice" or "crank," is highly addictive.

Wade's concerns mirror those of other law enforcement around the state and nation.

As the meth problem seems to be increasing, more money, hours and people are being dedicated to fighting it.

In mid-March Montana became part of the Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, a federal designation that will free up federal funds to go toward fighting meth in counties where the drug has proven to be a problem. Each year, five Montana counties — Missoula, Flathead, Yellowstone, Cascade and Lewis and Clark — will probably receive about \$100,000 toward fighting the drug.

The money is much-needed.

Methamphetamine labs are extremely dangerous and costly to clean up. Labs produce five to seven pounds of toxic waste for every pound of meth produced and clean-up crews have to take many precautions to make sure they and the surroundings aren't poisoned.

Labs are also very harmful to the environment and often labs or dumps for the chemicals are being discovered in public places like national forests. In 2000, 488 labs were found in the woods nationwide, up from 80 in 1997. In other places, chemicals have poisoned creeks and killed livestock.

The craze for little white pills

Jessie Childress
Montana Kaimin

Ecstasy. It's in anti-drug commercials and on the streets. Young teens at raves live by the drug and some, like a 16-year-old girl in March named Brandy, have died by the drug.

Across the nation — as well as in Europe and Canada — a debate is raging. Health researchers who believe that Ecstasy causes permanent brain damage have been pitted against psychologists who believe it can help patients in therapy.

Law enforcement officials have upped their seizures of the pills while clandestine labs keep producing more and people keep demanding more.

Little is known about the health effects of MDMA, the amphetamine derivative called "Ecstasy" or the "Hug Drug" because of the sense of well-being and affection it produces.

What is known is that Ecstasy has caused destruction of serotonin neurons in the brains of laboratory animals, and this phenomenon may transfer over to human users.

Another certainty is that use of Ecstasy in the United States, as well as in Canada and Europe, is on the rise. A Harvard study found that use at 119 four-year colleges rose from 2.8 percent of the student population in 1997 to 4.7 percent in 1999. A smaller sample of colleges with high rates of substance abuse found that Ecstasy use rose to 10.6 percent in 2000, up from 4.7 percent in 1997.

Users of Ecstasy in Missoula say that its popularity and availability is growing here too.

Jack, a 21-year-old who attended UM for three semesters, said he's noticed this change.

"Missoula's starting to open up to it a lot more," he said, "which is good in a way. It wasn't around as much before."

Jack said that in the past year he's probably taken Ecstasy 20 times. Since January, he said, he's lowered his usage from about once a week to once a month because of the drain on his pocketbook. In Missoula, one pill of Ecstasy costs about \$25, he said. If buying in larger quantities, however, the cost may be \$20. In very large quantities it may cost \$12 a pill.

Jack said he first tried it because he thinks everything should be tried, and he has continued using it because of its appeal.

"The main thing I like about it is the connections," he said. "I feel like I have a vast understanding, not necessarily a love for everyone as much as I just understand and forgive them for every-

Ecstasy's not a very good drug. It's a bad idea because when I'm 40 and I see my daughter get married or something like that, I would rather that be a more pleasurable experience than some night when I took a bunch of Ecstasy and my serotonin levels shot off the charts and I just went to a party or something.

Scott,
UM student

thing that they do. It's kind of a roller-coaster ride of emotions. It makes you very passionate about every emotion you have."

Brian, a 21-year-old UM student, said he hasn't turned down Ecstasy when it's been offered to him in four years, even when he knew it wasn't real.

"Real Ecstasy is the best drug I've ever done," he said. "It gives you an amazing feeling of hope and an amazing sensitivity to touch and incredible empathy for people. People will pour their hearts out to you, and you see a side of them you've never seen before because it reduces so many inhibitions."

At the same time, Brian said he knows it's bad for his health. He said he knows that when he loses certain functions or neurons in his brain, he will never be the same. However, he said, he has the same attitude toward all drugs.

"I may now be too young to see the effects that they may have on my memory and things like that," Brian said. "But at the same time, I don't think I have done enough physical damage to my brain to make it not worthwhile to have this experience."

He said he thinks his experiences on drugs have been worth it, and he is doing well enough — holding down two jobs and maintaining a high GPA — that he doesn't worry about it.

Scott, another 21-year-old UM student, said that though he's done Ecstasy 15 to 20 times, he doesn't like it.

"Ecstasy's not a very good drug," he said. "It's a bad idea because when I'm 40 and I see my daughter get married or something like that, I would rather that be a more pleasurable experience than some night when I took a bunch of Ecstasy and my serotonin levels shot off the charts and I just went to a party or something."

Jack said he doesn't believe Ecstasy is bad for his health. He said the only thing he worries about is that on the street it may be

cut, or diluted, with something that is bad for him. The rest of Ecstasy's bad rap in the news, he said, is unsubstantiated information.

"We really don't know much about Ecstasy and its effects," Jack said. "And to claim outrageously that it is completely harmful is just a vulgar lie, much like the lies in the '70s about marijuana. I don't really think it has any effects at all."

A growing body of information shows that Ecstasy might impair brain function and cause damage to users' memory, learning and general intelligence. While the debate about what Ecstasy does or doesn't do to those who use it rages on, Sgt. Geron Wade of the Missoula Police Department said he thinks the availability and use of Ecstasy is on the rise here. He said, however, that it is difficult to gauge the extent to which Ecstasy is a problem in Missoula.

Ecstasy is primarily associated with raves and other club scenes. It has become popular with young crowds who want to be able to dance all night and want the euphoria and well-being that Ecstasy creates in its users.

Jack said that he doesn't like the club scene that Ecstasy has flourished in and he thinks the scene is part of why Ecstasy has gotten a bad rap. He said people who take it to party are taking it for the wrong reasons.

"People who just want to use it to feel in love with someone," he said, "or to feel like they're having a good time when they're really not — that's truly a sad thing."

Brian said many people who use it take party use it carelessly, and do things like forgetting to hydrate themselves or not resting. Some people let it take over their lives.

"If you can't feel happy without a drug," he said, "get help right away because you need it. And I've totally felt that way before. I sought help and got it. And, yeah, I still do the drugs recreationally, but I still have so much fun without them. They're not a priority to me anymore."

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SPECIAL SECTION: DRUGS AND UM

Roofies: One night, one drink, one woman's story

Kellyn Brown
for the Kaimin

Karyn Shaffer didn't feel it coming. She stood at the top of her stairs and began to get dizzy, then fell backward, hitting each step on the way down, bruising her body as she tumbled. She was unconscious for an hour.

"I can tell every detail of the night up to that point," Shaffer said.

Shaffer had been drugged.

The use of date rape drugs is believed to be on the rise across the country and in Montana. Incidents involving such drugs as Rohypnol are being reported more frequently in Missoula, according to Ken Welt, director of Counseling and Psychological Services at UM. The drugs come in the form of a small pill, dissolve quickly and can be fatal.

Rohypnol is the brand name for flunitrazepam. It causes breathing difficulties, low blood pressure, amnesia and slow motor skills. Its street names include "roofies," "rob" or "rope," and it is reportedly becoming the date rape drug of choice.

It is hard to judge the extent of the growth in the Missoula area because the Curry Health Center has no specific number on how much the incidents have increased, partly because testing for the drug is extremely expensive and has to be done within hours of consumption. However, Curry has reported an increase of women coming into the center reporting that they think they have been "roofied."

It only takes a second for a potential attacker to take advantage of an unguarded glass. Shaffer didn't notice the potent tranquilizer — it's an odorless, tasteless drug — that was slipped into her drink.

Her night began on a good note — at a local concert where she was dancing early in the evening. Her sister Crissy was with her up front, close to the stage.

"I drink in moderation," Shaffer said. "I limit myself to how much I can handle."

After the concert, Shaffer's sister Crissy left, so she went to meet her friends at another local bar. Again, she was feeling good.

She ordered a beer.

Her friends were at the table, drinking and laughing over a pitcher.

Shaffer's sickness came quickly. She began turning white and told her friend that she wasn't drunk, just nauseated. She hurried home and decided to eat to calm her stomach. That was when she walked up the stairs.

An hour later Shaffer was lying on the floor with vomit all over her.

"I couldn't control my body," Shaffer said. "While I was unconscious I was puking on myself."

This is how it begins. It takes an hour, sometimes two, but the pill that was dropped into a drink will hit the victim, and when it does, it hits hard.

"All of the sudden — boom — something happened," Shaffer said.

The use of predator drugs seems to be increasing in the area, Welt said. As more victims report these incidents to the Curry Health Center, the health center is becoming more concerned.

Enough so that Welt sent out a news release March 14 explaining what to do if you suspect that you have been drugged and how to prevent getting something slipped into your drink.

Memory loss, confusion, blackouts, stiffness and a severe, heavy hangover are all symptoms of a being "roofied."

That is what Shaffer was dealing with as she lay on the carpet. She was awake and knew she had to get up to the bathroom, but her body wouldn't move.

"My mind would not control my body's actions," Shaffer said. "I was frozen. I was bawling. I thought I was dying. I had no idea what was



Rohypnol, a drug that is increasingly being slipped into drinks at bars, causes confusion, memory loss, blackouts and can be fatal.

going on and it was scary."

When Shaffer could move she crawled up the stairs she had fallen down two hours earlier. Her body was tingling and shaking, and she said it felt like her whole body fell asleep at the same time.

"I was like a vegetable," Shaffer said.

Shaffer did everything right. She was with a group of friends who made sure she got to her house, alone and safely. That night, although sedated, she did not put herself in the position to be sexually assaulted.

But when the following morning came her ordeal was not over. Initially, her sister could not wake her up, and when she did awake she couldn't talk or explain what happened the evening before.

Crissy took her younger sister to the emergency room and explained all that she could to the staff. While walking to the hospital room, Shaffer passed out and then awoke in a hospital

bed.

"They gave me a shot to stop me from puking," Shaffer said. "The doctor told me he thought I had gotten drugged."

When Shaffer got home that Saturday night after a few hours in the hospital, she fell asleep. She didn't wake up until Monday morning.

Shaffer doesn't remember leaving her drink unattended. She had her glass or bottle in-hand most of the evening and was surrounded by a large group of trusted friends. But preventing a perpetrator from gaining access to a drink at a bar is nearly impossible.

"Good judgement is important," Welt said. "But it is not going to stop the problem."

Welt said Missoula is generally a safe place but it is "not as safe as we think it is."

Fear, anxiety, self doubt and trust are all compromised when an individual is victimized by a date rape drug, Welt said.

"I am terrified to go out,"

Shaffer said. "I sought out counseling and I am scared of everybody. It took me two weeks to start being myself again."

When women are drugged it is common for them to lose trust in men and gain it back slowly, Welt said. After the initial trauma and terror of the event people recover, eventually, through engaging in healthy relationships again.

It has been a little more than a month since the night Shaffer was drugged at a local bar. She was apprehensive to tell her story, embarrassed and timid about the idea of sharing what happened. She is certain something was put in her drink, but like many in her position, she was never tested.

Then Shaffer found out the girl who had been sitting next to her at the bar was in the ER the next morning experiencing what she had.

"I was 98 percent sure of what happened," Shaffer said. "After

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