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University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "CHAMPS program takes Grizzly athletics into community" (1997). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 14587.
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NEWS RELEASE

Jan. 22, 1997

CHAMPS PROGRAM TAKES GRIZZLY ATHLETES INTO COMMUNITY

MISSOULA --

Graduating a student athlete from The University of Montana—Missoula means more than sending an accomplished competitor into the world. It means graduating a person with a variety of life skills.

The new CHAMPS/Life Skills program at UM helps develop athletes in non-athletic ways. The NCAA program is designed to enrich students through academics, athletics, community outreach, career enhancement and personal development. The program is loosely structured so each school can create its own program to meet its own resources.

Grizzly basketball forward guard Brandon Dade has been involved in community service since he arrived at UM from Los Angeles five years ago. Coaches sent the then 17-year-old Dade into the community to talk to school children as a way to help him overcome his feelings of culture shock and homesickness.

"I went out to see what Missoula is about," Dade says. "I found how special the people are and how special they would treat me."

Dade is an example of how the CHAMPS/Life Skills program can work for all Grizzly athletes, says Marie Porter, UM's associate athletic director and CHAMPS coordinator.

"I'd like people to recognize all the good things the student athletes do here, beyond entertaining us athletically," Porter says. "They are incredibly good people. I hope people get a

Champs.rl--2

chance to meet them and see it for themselves."

Grizzly athletes are often asked to speak in schools and to community groups, but until now there hasn't been an established program. Under the CHAMPS program, this spring the athletes will identify areas they are interested in, whether it be playing with school kids during recess or talking to classes and civic groups.

Fans interested in having a Grizzly athlete speak or work with community groups may call Porter at 243-5331.

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Contact: Marie Porter, CHAMPS coordinator, 243-5331.

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