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MISSOULA – “A New Angle,” a weekly interview podcast profiling cool people doing awesome things in and around Montana, is coming to Montana Public Radio. Beginning July 1, MTPR will broadcast new episodes of “A New Angle” over its stations across western and central Montana. The show also will continue to be available as a podcast.

Episodes of “A New Angle” will air on MTPR each Thursday at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 5 a.m. New weekly episodes also will continue to be released online as podcasts every Thursday on all major podcast platforms.

“A New Angle” is hosted by UM College of Business Associate Professor Justin Angle. The show premiered in 2018 and has amassed nearly 200 episodes. The podcast is recorded in Studio 49 of the Michele and Loren Hansen Media Lab in UM’s Gallagher Business Building.

“This is a fantastic opportunity for the show,” said Angle. “Our goal is to create conversations listeners can learn from, and we’re excited to bring these conversations to more Montanans.”

Starting July 1, listeners can expect interviews with the likes of legendary alpinist Conrad Anker, economist and tribal leader Winona LaDuke and longtime Montana political reporter Chuck Johnson. Listeners also can access “A New Angle’s” catalog of nearly 200 episodes, including popular editions with UM head football coach Bobby Hauck, Pearl Jam’s Jeff Ament and best-selling author Cheryl Strayed.

“We’re excited to add ‘A New Angle’ to the lineup, it’s a good fit for MTPR’s evening show schedule,” said Michael Marsolek, MTPR Program Director. “Listeners to the show will have the opportunity to hear interviews with innovative guests from across Montana."

Fans can follow A New Angle Podcast on social media – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram – to stay up to date on guests and the release of new episodes.

Blackfoot Communications, First Security Bank and UM’s College of Business are presenting sponsors of the podcast. Additional support is provided by Consolidated Electrical Distributors,
Drum Coffee and Montana Public Radio.

Listeners can tune into MTPR live on the radio or online. To find a station or to stream online, visit www.mtpr.org.

Contact: Justin Angle, UM associate professor of marketing and Poe Family Distinguished Faculty Fellow, 206-650-5522, justin.angle@umontana.edu.
UM Scientists Lead Call to Forego Fireworks this Fourth of July

30 JUNE 2021
UM fire experts have joined with more than 150 other researchers urging people to forgo fireworks this Fourth of July holiday to prevent fires like this one near Missoula in 2020.

MISSOULA – University of Montana researchers led an effort by more than 150 scientists across the country urging people to forego fireworks this Fourth of July.

The urgency stems from the combination of extensive drought, the recent heat wave affecting the northwestern U.S. and Canada, and the upcoming holiday weekend. The Fourth of July is perennially associated with hundreds of human-ignited fires across the country.

Their article, “Over 100 fire scientists urge the U.S. West: Skip the fireworks this record-dry Fourth of July,” was published in the nonprofit media outlet The Conversation on June 30. It was written by researchers Philip Higuera and Alexander Metcalf of UM’s W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation, as well as David McWethy from Montana State University and Jennifer Balch from the University of Colorado Boulder.

The authors highlight previous research showing that from 1992 to 2015 human-related ignitions started more than 7,000 wildfires in the U.S. on July 4. In the West, more fires start from human sources on July 4 than any other day of the year. Many of these fires were near homes.

“With this year’s tinder-dry grasslands and parched forests,” the authors write, “sparks from anything – a cigarette, a
UM Scientists Lead Call to Forego Fireworks this Fourth of July

Western wildfires near homes spike on July 4th

People cause the vast majority of wildfires in the West's wildland-urban interface, where homes are near wildland areas. The chart shows the total number of fires each day from 1992-2015. The data show how fires from human sources spike on July 4.

Campfire, a power line, even a mower blade hitting a rock – could ignite a wildfire, with deadly consequences.

“We are strongly encouraging folks to celebrate the Fourth without fireworks and enjoy all the other ways to celebrate our freedoms with friends and family,” Metcalf said.

The idea for the article and sign-on letter came just this past weekend, as some of the team saw a fireworks stand outside of Missoula.

“It’s nerve wracking to see the key ingredients for human-damaging wildfires to align across much of the West these next few days – record-dry vegetation, plus potential ignitions from fireworks,” Higuera said. “We wanted to raise awareness of this very predictable pattern of human-started fires, particularly this year.”

UM fire experts were joined by signatories from 51 academic or research institutions from 20 U.S. states, as well as Canada, Australia, Italy and Spain. The majority were from the U.S. West, including over 30 from Montana, 15 from Colorado, 11 from Oregon and Idaho, seven
from California and six each from Arizona and Washington.

The signatories included 30 faculty and scientists from UM, who study varying aspects of the causes and impacts of wildfires. UM is home to world-renowned wildfire experts, including ecologists and fire scientists, as well as health, policy and human-dimensions researchers. Their recent work on wildfire includes an article on extensive high elevation fires in the Rocky Mountains, an article on social and ecological resilience to wildfire and conducting an educational prescribed burn on UM's Bandy Ranch.

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Contact: Philip Higuera, professor of fire ecology and paleoecology, 406-599-8908, philip.higuera@umontana.edu; Alexander Metcalf, associate professor of human dimension of natural resources, 814-574-6128, alex.metcalf@umontana.edu, W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation at UM.
MISSOULA COLLEGE

MISSOULA COLLEGE OFFERS JOB SITE SAFETY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

28 JUNE 2021
A student participates in Missoula College’s Job Site Ready construction program, a new 30-hour microcredential certificate program that works with industry partners to meet workforce needs. The program also aims to recruit a new generation of workers into the construction field, where labor demands are high.

MISSOULA – Power saws whirred, drills buzzed and 2-by-4-inch lumber clattered together recently as the first class of students in Missoula College’s new Job Site Ready construction program gained the skills they need to start entry-level jobs in construction.

The program is one of the ways Missoula College is working with industry partners to help meet workforce needs and recruit younger generations into the construction industry, as the demand for skilled workers in Montana outpaces supply.

The 45-hour program, which includes 30 hours of self-paced online learning followed by 15 hours of in-person training, provides students with an understanding of the construction industry, job safety, hand and power tool operation and construction processes and techniques.

During the weeklong onsite training held June 14-18, program participants gained hands-on experience marking, measuring and cutting wood to build a shed, while putting into practice online lessons about workplace safely.
Upon completion of the course, students leave with their own set of professional tools and the credentials needed to be hired as an entry-level construction worker.

“They're walking off with not only the physical tools but also a holistic overview of what they're going to be required to do, general terminology for the job site, how to use a tool,” said Steve Rosbarsky, an adjunct instructor of the program.

The Job Site Ready construction program is available as a Montana University System credit option, as non-credit workforce training, or for pre-apprenticeship hours.

“The program focuses on helping students become workforce ready through short, accessible and affordable classes that give people the skills they need to get a job,” said John Freer, director of Missoula College’s Sustainable Construction Technology program.

The self-paced online portion of the program can be completed from any location and Missoula College is working to make the onsite training available across the state by partnering with two-year institutions in Bozeman, Hamilton, Great Falls and Billings. Hellgate High School.
students also will be able to earn college credit for the program through a dual enrollment pilot beginning next year, Freer said.

“We spent a whole generation telling kids that they needed to get a four-year degree and now, we have a huge gap in skilled labor,” Freer said. “We’re also starting to recognize that the construction industry has some of the best high-paying entry level jobs and it’s one of the easiest industries to advance in.”

Freer said Missoula College worked with contractors and industry partners while developing the program to identify the most important skills that workers need on their first day on a job site for construction. Some companies such as Jackson Contractor Group, have already sponsored a handful of high school students to take the course after hiring them to be junior apprentices for the summer.

“It helps the contractor because they can pay for the training and they don’t have to stop what they’re doing to provide it,” Freer said.

Dain Simunovich, a 17-year-old rising senior at Hellgate High School, is one of the students who completed the Job Site Ready program with sponsorship from Jackson Contractor Group. Simunovich, who wants to study engineering in college and work on the design side of the industry, said he’s excited to get a sense of how a construction job site works as he spends the summer working in construction.

“I plan on using this apprenticeship as an opportunity to see how a company like this works, to get some experience and use it as a way to further my education,” said Simunovich.

The program costs $750, which includes the training and a set of tools valued at about $250. Rosbarsky said he and Freer selected the tools based on their years of experience and knowledge of what workers need.

“They’re getting a high-quality set so they can feel confident to show up on their first day as a professional,” Rosbarsky said.

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Contact: Dave Kuntz, UM strategic communications director, 406-243-5659,
Missoula College Offers Job Site Safety Certification Program

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Montana Women Convene for Fifth Annual Montana Leadership Institute

MISSOULA — Undergraduate women from across Montana are participating in the fifth annual Montana NEW Leadership Institute at the University of Montana. The non-partisan five-day residential program, taking place through June 24, seeks to educate, empower and encourage collegiate women to become politically active and to take on leadership roles.

The Montana NEW Leadership Institute is part of the national bipartisan NEW Leadership program, developed by the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University.

During the program, students meet local, state and national leaders and develop leadership skills through discussions, workshops and hands-on projects. Participants are encouraged to continue to develop their leadership skills and share what they have learned within their respective communities.

“We are fortunate to house this program to advance the role of women across our state and in support of Montana students becoming part of a nationally recognized cohort of women developing leadership skills,” said program Academic Director Dr. Sara Rinfret.

Participants represent a range of backgrounds and interests, including UM theater major Amirra Patterson; health sciences major Bailey Chalfant of West Texas A&M University; and nursing student Charlie Engum of Great Falls College.

The Center for American Women and Politics is nationally recognized as the leading source of scholarly research and current data about American women’s political participation. Its mission is to promote greater knowledge and understanding about women’s participation in politics and
Montana Women Convene for Fifth Annual Montana Leadership Institute

government and to enhance women's influence and leadership in public life.

Leadership skills training like the Montana NEW Leadership Program help women bridge the gap between political interest and political leadership.

The program is led by Rinfret of UM’s Department of Public Administration and Policy, Administrative Director Deena Mansour of UM’s Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center and Political Director Stacie Anderson, a member of the Missoula City Council and executive director of A Better Big Sky.

The Mansfield Center fosters globally minded leaders of integrity and sponsors this event within its program for ethical public policy and leadership. The center was founded by an Act of Congress in 1983 in honor of Mike Mansfield’s service to our nation in a spirit of integrity and bipartisanship.

More information is available online at: https://www.umt.edu/mansfield/um-students/newleadership/about.php

Contact: Sara Rinfret, academic director, Montana NEW Leadership, 406-243-4702, sara.rinfret@umontana.edu
UM Family Medicine Residency Program to Graduate 10 New Family Physicians
MISSOULA – Underserved and rural areas in Montana and other states will gain 10 new family medicine physicians when the University of Montana’s Family Medicine Residency of Western Montana graduates its sixth class on June 27.

“FMRWM is proud to announce the graduation of our sixth class of family medicine physicians,” said Dr. Robert Stenger, the program’s director. “Our program continues to meet its mission of providing well-trained family physicians for rural and underserved communities in Montana. This year’s graduates will enter practices in Butte, Columbia Falls, Miles City, Missoula and Ronan.”

The class of 2021 and their future practice sites are: Emily Anderson, doctor of osteopathic medicine (Ronan); Carey Downey, medical doctor (Butte); Ariel Fillmore, MD (Salt Lake City); Geoff Holman, MD (Missoula); Sarah Horne, MD (Missoula); James Jennings, DO (Oneonta, New York); Kelsey Morgosh, MD (Flagstaff, Arizona); Margie Albers, MD (Miles City); Chelsie Russig, DO (Columbia Falls); and Eric Weber, MD (to be determined).

Based in Missoula and Kalispell, FMRWM is sponsored by UM and affiliated with the University of Washington Family Medicine Residency Network. The program is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. Residents are involved in continuity clinic training at Partnership Health Center in Missoula and Greater Valley Health Center in Kalispell.

The program works with an extensive rural training network at 16 sites: Barrett Hospital and HealthCare, Dillon; Blackfeet Community Hospital, Browning; Central Montana Medical Center, Lewistown; Clark Fork Valley Hospital, Plains; Community Hospital of Anaconda; Deer Lodge Medical Center; Eureka Healthcare, North Valley Hospital; Madison Valley
UM Family Medicine Residency Program to Graduate 10 New Family Physicians

Medical Center, **Ennis**; Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital, **Hamilton**; Northwest Community Health Center, **Libby**; Providence St. Joseph Medical Center, **Polson**; Ruby Valley Medical Center, Sheridan; St. Luke Community Hospital, **Ronan**; St. James Medical Group & Southwest Montana Community Health Center, **Butte**; Stoneybrook Medicine, **Stevensville**; Tribal Health of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, **St. Ignatius**.

Reed Humphrey, UM College of Health dean and acting provost, serves as the designated institutional official for the FMRWM and leads UM Health & Medicine program.

“The residency program is a critically important element of our interprofessional collaboration efforts at UM,” he said. “We are pleased to be able to sponsor and work closely with the residency program in our widening portfolio of contemporary health education programs.”

For more information visit [http://health.umt.edu/fmrwm/](http://health.umt.edu/fmrwm/).

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**Contact:** Nathan Gilliam, FMRWM program coordinator, 406-258-4451, nathan.gilliam@mso.umt.edu.
UM Family Medicine Residency Program to Graduate 10 New Family Physicians
MTPR, MTPBS Programs Receive Prestigious Statewide Recognition
MISSOULA – Two MontanaPBS television programs and two Montana Public Radio programs received E.B. Craney Awards from the Montana Broadcasters Association and the Greater Montana Foundation.

The E.B. Craney Awards recognize excellence in local news, production, promotion, programs and public service in both radio and television stations across the state. The awards were presented this past weekend during an online presentation from the MBA.

“Keeping the Barn,” produced by John Twiggs, was named Television Non-Commercial Program of the Year. The program celebrated the rich heritage and stories connected to the barns of Montana. Twiggs also was a finalist for Television Broadcaster of the Year.

Paul Zalis, co-producer and writer of “Charlie Russell's Old West,” received the E.B. Craney Award for Television Writer: News and Long Form Programming. The program explored Russell’s art and life as he witnessed and documented the end of the Wild West open range and America entered the 20th century. “Charlie Russell's Old West” also was named runner-up for Program of the Year.

For Radio Non-Commercial Program of the Year, Montana Public Radio took the prize for the program “Shared State.” The program co-produced by MTPR, Montana Free Press and Yellowstone Public Radio gave listeners a deeper look at the most important issues on the 2020 ballot.

MTPR news reporter Edward O’Brien took home the E.B. Craney Award in the Radio News Story category for his story, “New Mental Health Emphasis a Lifeline for National Guard Soldiers.” O’Brien introduced listeners to a career Montana military officer who, during one of her life’s darkest chapters, reached out for help and was thrown a lifeline. MTPR’s Nick Mott was runner-up in the category for his story on mine waste cleanup on the Clark Fork River.
Additionally, the MTPR podcast “ Richest Hill” was named runner-up in the Podcast category.

Montana Public Radio and MontanaPBS are part of the University of Montana Broadcast Media Center.

Montana Public Radio airs across much of western and central Montana at 89.1 and 91.5 in Missoula, 91.9 in Hamilton, 89.5 in Polson, 90.1 in Kalispell, Whitefish and North Valley, 90.5 in Libby, 91.7 in Kalispell, 101.3 in Swan Lake, 91.3 in Butte, 91.7 in Helena, 89.9 in Great Falls, 91.7 in Dillon and online at mtpr.org.

MontanaPBS (KUFM-TV in Missoula, KUSM-TV in Bozeman, KUKL-TV in Kalispell, KBGS-TV in Billings, KUGF-TV in Great Falls and KUHM-TV in Helena) is a service of UM and Montana State University. For more information visit http://www.montanapbs.org/.

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**Clips:**

Keeping the Barn: https://www.montanapbs.org/programs/keepingthebarn/

Charlie Russell’s Old West: https://www.pbs.org/show/charlie-russells-old-west/

Shared State: https://www.mtpr.org/programs/shared-state

New Mental Health Emphasis Provides a Lifeline for National Guard Soldiers: https://www.mtpr.org/post/new-mental-health-emphasis-provides-lifeline-national-guard-soldiers


Richest Hill: https://www.mtpr.org/programs/richest-hill

**Contact:** Ray Ekness, director, UM Broadcast Media Center, 406-243-4154,
UM Employee-Student Uses Internship to ‘Connect Montana’

22 JUNE 2021
Julie Heaton, director of UM’s Financial Education Program, is working toward a Master of Public Administration in UM’s Baucus Institute of Public Administration and Policy. She is sharpening her skills this year serving as an intern for the Montana World Affairs Council.

MISSOULA – Like many University of Montana employees, Julie Heaton considers lifelong learning critical to her success.

For the past year, in addition to serving as director of UM’s highly successful Financial Education Program, she’s been enrolled as a graduate student working toward a Master of Public Administration in UM’s Baucus Institute of Public Administration and Policy. And, this summer, she is sharpening her interest in global and societal issues – notably those surrounding inequality – working as an intern for the Montana World Affairs Council, a nonprofit dedicated to fostering global awareness in Montana classrooms and communities.

“I taught in China and did a lot of study abroad experiences,” Heaton said. “I think when we learn about other countries and cultures we create a powerful educational tool for addressing common issues like inequality.”

Heaton’s internship is focused on promoting and organizing the council’s webcast called “Connect
Montana”. The webcast, which started in spring 2020, enlists speakers from across the world to discuss currents affairs such as immigration, international policy, climate change and the U.S. political landscape.

The Montana World Affairs Council was founded in 2000 by retired Ambassador Mark Johnson, a fourth-generation Montanan from Great Falls. In the past 20 years it has hosted or co-sponsored hundreds of community and school programs across the state and the world.

For her part, Heaton has taken on myriad tasks to extend the outreach of ‘Connect Montana,” including organizing speakers and creating promotional campaigns to connect people of all ages and communities to the webcast. To foster two-way conversations with listeners, she developed audience surveys and initiated a Facebook live series called “The Take Away” that follows and expands on the webcast’s themes. UM students and staff participate in each episode.

“We are looking to create a deeper engagement beyond our speakers,” said Heaton, adding that she established a suggested reading list for listeners who want to delve deeper into the subjects highlighted on “Connect Montana.”

Chris Hyslop, executive director of the council, credits Heaton for the four-fold growth in the webcast audience, noting that she never flinched at taking on the task of building the webcast’s presence.

“I asked Julie to look at best practices for a webcast like ours and she was the engine behind step one to step 10,” Hyslop said. Heaton, he adds, will be taking her skills this summer to do all the “spade work” for next fall’s webcast editions.

Heaton is one of approximately 92 students enrolled in UM’s MPA program, which is the only accredited MPA program in Montana. Earlier this year, it was ranked fourth nationally out of the Best 25 Masters in Public Administration Schools.

Sara Rinfret, Department of Public Administration and Policy professor and associate dean, calls Heaton one of the “best and brightest” in the program.

“Her work with the World Affairs Council this year has demonstrated how she can translate theory to practice and help our communities excel,” Rinfret said.
Heaton has one more year to go in the MPA program and is certain she will draw from her experiences working for the council. Heaton is one 160 UM employees who take advantage of a discount on academic coursework for professional mobility.

“The skillsets I’ve learned will traverse many fields,” Heaton said. “What I am learning can be applied whether I am working on women’s empowerment issues or with my work at UM making college financially accessible to students. The council is an incredible organization, and this has been an incredible experience.”

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**Contact:** Andi Armstrong, director of marketing and communications, UM Alexander Blewett III School of Law, 406-243-6509, andi.armstrong@umontana.edu
UM Student, Researchers Analyze Montana Childhood Undervaccination
MISSOULA – The map of Montana Kayla Irish pulls up is peppered with red circles, each cluster providing details behind one of today’s timely topics – childhood vaccination.

The project, led by Dr. Sophia Newcomer in the University of Montana’s Center for Population Health Research, is the first spatial scan analysis to identify hotspots of undervaccinated children across Montana and evaluate whether they are due to social or geographic barriers.

CPHR is funded through the National Institutes of Health, and the analysis is part of a collaborative study with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services to help inform the state’s public health measures.

Irish, a history and math major from Lewistown set to graduate from UM this fall, became involved in January after taking a statistics course with UM math Professor Jon Graham, who also is the Data and Modeling Core director of CPHR.

Irish said the
UM Student, Researchers Analyze Montana Childhood Undervaccination

The project is the first to use data, rather than anecdotes from physicians, on why childhood undervaccination exists in the state.

“Montana is already undervaccinated, and this study overall is trying to find out why and where,” Irish said.

The CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends that by age 2, when they are most vulnerable, children receive the combined 7-vaccine series. These vaccines work against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis; polio; measles, mumps and rubella; hepatitis B; varicella; Haemophilus influenzae type b; and pneumococcal disease.

According to the CPHR and Montana DPHHS study, published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Montana lags behind the 2019 national childhood combined 7-series vaccination rate of 71%. Just 62% of the children studied completed the vaccine series, and only 38% received them on time – fewer than two in five.

Partnering with DPHHS, the CPHR Data and Modeling Core analyzed immunization data on Montana children born between 2015 and 2017, which includes more than 30,000 kids. Newcomer, an assistant professor in UM’s School of Public and Community Health Sciences, led the research effort as one of several projects ongoing in CPHR.

Irish and Graham then used biostatistical modeling and a spatial statistical technique known as spatial scan analysis to identify and create the maps of clusters of undervaccination.

“This technique takes measurements of some variable of interest on a landscape and identifies hotspots of unusual values,” Graham said. “Kayla and I read several papers on the spatial scan method, learned how to implement it in the R statistical software package and applied it to the vaccination data.”

The research method considers hundreds of thousands of areas throughout the state to identify large and small geographic hotspots with the highest rates of childhood undervaccination of the combined 7-vaccine series. In addition to identifying the clusters, separate analyses identified groups where children may be undervaccinated due to access barriers such as geographic distances and those where parents are hesitant to vaccinate their children.

To identify patterns suggestive of parental hesitancy, the researchers looked for inconsistency in the number of vaccines children received in the series or vaccines spread out over multiple
“Say you have all the different vaccines in the combined 7- vaccine series,” Irish said. “If five of them are perfectly on time and two of them aren’t happening, that’s a pretty clear sign of parents consciously electing not to vaccinate with certain shots.”

According to the spatial analysis, parental hesitancy on vaccination is concentrated in the western part of the state.

Structural or access barriers, in contrast, mainly show up on the eastern side. To determine potential structural barriers, the team looked at children missing final vaccine doses or receiving them late.

Irish said looking at the two factors helps researchers understand how to increase vaccination rates in certain areas. Interventions to structural barriers, for example, might include hiring more vaccine program providers or creating programs in nontraditional settings for areas where clinics may be inaccessible, while social media tools and physician-client discussions may aid in addressing parental hesitancy.

“I think it’s really cool because the long-term objective of this study is to test and determine ways to intervene,” she said. “This is an amazing and great map for that.”

Rain Freeman, UM’s epidemiology specialist and the project’s data manager, analyst and programmer, said national Vaccines for Children Program data showed a substantial dip in routine, pediatric vaccine orders at the beginning of the pandemic. And Montana was not immune to that trend.

Although more recent CDC data shows an uptick in vaccine orders again, it is not enough to catch up on the missed doses. Freeman said making sure children are vaccinated on time is crucial to preventing diseases during COVID-19 like measles, which needs a 95% vaccination rate for herd immunity.

“The problem is if vaccination rates for these preventable diseases dip too far below the estimated thresholds for herd immunity, we’re worried that we could have multiple epidemics or outbreaks occurring as social interaction becomes a little more normal,” she said.
As a history major, Irish is interested in predicting the next preventable disease outbreak. Promoting community health, helping write a scientific paper, and using and managing data while working on the CPHR project also has prepared her for grad school.

“I’m gaining the skills I’ll be needing anyway,” she said. “It’s unbelievably useful to me. I cannot recommend undergrad research too much.”

The CPHR team is currently drafting a paper on these analyses and will submit it for publication in the coming months.

“It’s hard not to be excited,” Irish said. “I feel so much satisfaction. In computer science, it feels like in everything you do, you write a little bit of code and it always fails, and when you see it actually works, it’s so cool. And I have so many of those moments here.”

###

**Related stories:**

UM Receives Over $10M for Research Center on Population Health

Predicting the Pandemic

**Contact:** Dr. Sophia Newcomer, assistant professor, UM School of Public and Community Health Sciences, 406-243-4745, sophia.newcomer@umontana.edu.

By Courtney Brockman, UM News Service
Montana Grant Targets Mental Health Needs of Children, Young People
MISSOULA – Collaborators at Montana’s two largest universities recently were awarded a four-year $1.9 million grant to create a program that will train students and support organizations to better serve children, adolescents and youth with mental and behavioral health needs.

Targeted at western Montana, the federal Health Resources and Services Administration grant will fund a new Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Program. That program will be administered by both the University of Montana and Montana State University.

“This new program is significant because it benefits our youth,” said Mary-Ann Sontag Bowman, a UM social work associate professor and the principal investigator for the grant. “Although the state has many hard-working, effective mental health professionals working with our youth, there simply are not enough of them. This project funds the placement of graduate students in agencies and organizations that serve children, adolescents and transitional-age youth, expanding the capacity of organizations to meet immediate needs and help build the area’s workforce.”

The program will fund UM and MSU graduate students to deliver and integrate professional services into existing institutions, agencies and clinics. Most of the funds from the grant will go directly to student stipends.

Since students often practice where they are trained, Sontag Bowman said, placement in these agencies and organizations increases the likelihood of these future professionals staying in those communities.

“The grant will enhance the educational experiences of our university students,” Bowman said. “These stipends help us attract strong students to the program and offers support to reduce students’ financial burdens. This allows them to gain valuable experience with children,
adolescents and transitional-age youth that might not have been possible if the placement was unfunded.”

She said the grant will allow a group of faculty and staff members from multiple disciplines at both UM and MSU to collaborate for the common good of all Montanans.

“Because of this grant, our team can do what the two universities already do well – educate future professionals – in a targeted way that will support Montana's workforce and serve Montana families,” Sontag Bowman said.

Besides Sontag Bowman, other collaborators on the program will include co-principal investigators Jayna Mumbauer-Pisano (UM Department of Counselor Education), Greg Machek (UM School of Psychology Ph.D. program), Rebecca Pogoda (MSU Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Doctor of Nursing program) and Tracy Hellem (MSU Nursing Program).

Bryan Cochran (UM Clinical Psychology) and John Sommers-Flanagan (UM Department of Counselor Education) will serve as consultants. Former UM Director of Integrated Behavioral Health Holly Schleicher also will consult. Ilsa Seib (Western Montana Area Health Education Center) will serve as fiscal manager and Jean Carter (UM Pharmacy Practice) will be the project evaluator.

This new program is focused on western Montana, but it also will assist a second, four-year grant program awarded to the MSU College of Nursing to support psychiatry and mental health counseling students in eastern Montana. That program will help increase mental health care providers, particularly in rural and frontier areas.

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**Contact:** Mary-Ann Sontag Bowman, associate professor, UM School of Social Work, 406-243-5666, Mary-Ann.Bowman@umontana.edu.
UM Research: Rocky Mountain Forests Now Burning More Than Any Point in Past 2,000 Years
UM Research: Rocky Mountain Forests Now Burning More Than Any Point in Past 2,000 Years

Philip Higuera, UM professor of fire ecology (right), and his team examine a lake-sediment core from Chickaree Lake in Colorado’s Rocky Mountain National Park. The core is used to reconstruct fire and vegetation history over thousands of years. (Photo by Grace Carter)

MISSOULA – Following 2020’s extreme fire season, high-elevation forests in the central Rocky Mountains now are burning more than at any point in the past 2,000 years, according to a new University of Montana study recently published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Researchers from UM and the University of Wyoming analyzed a unique network of fire-history records to understand how 21st-century fire activity compares to wildfires in the past. The
findings highlight that burning in recent decades in high-elevation forests of northern Colorado and southern Wyoming is unprecedented over the past several millennia.

As fire paleoecologists – scientists who study historical ecosystems – the team uses charcoal found in lake sediments to piece together the fire history of forests across the Rocky Mountains. The idea, said lead author and UM professor Philip Higuera, is that understanding the past is key to understanding changes we see today and how forests may change in the future.

When 2020’s massive fire season hit, its ferocity startled Higuera and his co-authors – UM doctoral candidate Kyra Wolf and UW Professor Bryan Shuman. Last year, wildfires in Colorado burned through October, unusually late in the year. By November, the 2020 wildfires alone were responsible for 72% of the total area burned in high-elevation forests since 1984 in their study region, and Colorado had seen three of its largest fires on record.

Kyra Wolf, a UM Ph.D. candidate, holds a sample of charcoal and other organic materials from a core from a lake in western Montana. Variation in charcoal within the core is used to reconstruct past wildfires.

“As the 2020 fire season unfolded, we realized we already had a well-defined understanding of the fire history of many of the places burning, based on over 20 lake-sediment records our teams had collected over the past 15 years,” said Higuera, professor of fire ecology in the W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation. “When the smoke settled, we thought ‘Wow, we may have witnessed something truly unprecedented here.’ So we
combined the existing records for the first time and compared them to recent fire activity. To our surprise, 2020 indeed pushed fire activity outside the range of variability these forests have experienced over at least the past two millennia.”

The authors found that since 2000, wildfires are burning nearly twice as much area on average compared to the last 2,000 years. Whereas a high-elevation forest historically burned once every 230 years on average, in the 21st-century that has now shrunk to around 120 years. That’s more fire activity than occurred during the “Medieval Climate Anomaly,” a period around 1,200 years ago when temperatures spiked higher than they were during the 20th century.

While human activity and past fire suppression are important contributing factors to wildfires across the West, the work highlights increasingly warm, dry conditions as an overarching cause of increased burning in these high-elevation forests.

“It isn’t unexpected to have more fire as temperatures rise,” said co-author Wolf, who is studying fire history in the northern Rocky Mountains in UM’s Systems Ecology program. “Our records show that fire tracked past variations in climate just as it does today. What’s striking is that temperatures, and correspondingly fire, are now exceeding the range that these forests have coped with for thousands of years – largely as a result of human-caused climate change.”

For decades, scientists have predicted that climate warming would increase wildfire activity in high-elevation forests beyond the range historically experienced, Higuera said.

“It’s sobering to see that it’s clearly happening, and early in the 21st century – not in 2050, not in 2075, but by 2020,” he said.

Overall, the study is another indication that extreme fire seasons like 2020 – or like 2017 in Montana – will become increasingly common as summers continue to become warmer and drier than in past centuries.

Higuera and colleagues have previously highlighted ways communities and managers can respond to increasing fire activity, but he hopes this paper helps illustrate the significant impacts of human-caused climate change on wildfire, forests and the human communities that live among them.

“It may sound dire,” Higuera said, “but it’s critical to remember that we have ample opportunities to limit or reverse climate warming while still working to adapt to the increasing
fire activity expected in upcoming decades.”

The study, “Rocky Mountain subalpine forests now burning more than any time in recent millennia,” is online at https://www.pnas.org/content/118/25/e2103135118.

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Note: Higuera published an article in The Conversation on June 14 titled "Climate change is making Rocky Mountain forests more flammable now than at any time in the past 2,000 years."
UM Research: Rocky Mountain Forests Now Burning More Than Any Point in Past 2,000 Years
UM Research Reveals Why People Pick Certain Campsites
Researchers are using big data from national park reservations to understand how visitors pick campsites.

MISSOULA – Those in love with the outdoors can spend their entire lives chasing that perfect campsite. New University of Montana research suggests what they are trying to find.

Will Rice, a UM assistant professor of outdoor recreation and wildland management, used big data to study the 179 extremely popular campsites of Watchman Campground in Utah’s Zion National Park. Campers use an online system to reserve a wide variety of sites with different amenities, and people book the sites an average of 51 to 142 days in advance, providing hard data about demand.

Along with colleague Soyoung Park of Florida Atlantic University, Rice sifted through nearly 23,000 reservations. The researchers found that price and availability of electricity were the largest drivers of demand. Proximity to the adjacent river and ease of access also affected demand. Other factors – such as views of canyon walls or number of nearby neighbors – seemed to have less impact.

The work was published in the Journal of Environmental Management.

“This study demonstrated the power of using the big data of outdoor recreationists’ revealed preferences to build models of decision-making, and did so in a setting that is incredibly relatable to many Americans,” Rice said. “For instance, anyone who has ever picked a campsite within a campground has certainly dealt with the dilemma of proximity to the restroom. I mean, we want to be close enough to make navigation easy in the middle of the night, but not so close that we’re smelling it and listening to the door open and close all night.”

He said past studies on recreation decision-making have relied on surveying people about their stated preferences – basically asking them what they like. This study broke new ground by using revealed preferences – observations of people’s actual decision-making – made possible by the Recreation Information Database. That database contains facts about all bookings made through the federal Recreation.gov site, which makes reservations for many national parks across America.

The researchers studied these site variables at the Watchman Campground: distance to the nearest dump station; distance to the nearest restroom, trash or recycling station, or water spigot; whether it was a walk-in site; price and electricity; number of neighboring campsites within a 40-meter radius; campsite shading; access to the nearby Virgin River; direct access to canyon walls; and views of canyon walls. These variables were broken into three setting categories: managerial, social and ecological.

Certain amenities at sites influenced how early they are reserved, on average. For instance, good views of the canyon walls increase the average booking window by three days. Price, access to electricity and ease of access also increase how early sites are reserved, demonstrating their popularity.

Rice said they were surprised that sites with access to the Virgin River were less popular. He suspects this might be because of known struggles with the river’s water quality, and Zion National Park has issued a press release urging visitors not to swim or submerge themselves in the river.

Rice said their work and new research model can help park managers make better decisions about campground design and recreation planning.
“Since the 1960s, park managers – in collaboration with researchers – have been trying to figure out how people make decisions when choosing campsites, trails or any number of recreation facilities,” he said. “This information is vital for recreation planning, not only for improving visitor experiences but also for ensuring the protection of ecological resources and fair allocation of recreation opportunities.”

It also demonstrates the usefulness of a big-data approach for measuring the demand on stretched recreational resources.

“Our findings specific to Zion’s Watchman Campground highlight the merit of using these methodologies elsewhere,” Rice said. “As campers, we’re always in search for the perfect campsite.”

The Journal of Environmental Management article is online. Rice is a faculty member in UM’s W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation.

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UM Research Reveals Why People Pick Certain Campsites
Montana Water Rights Run Deep for UM Law Student

10 JUNE 2021
UM law student Brooke Reynolds, serving this summer as an intern on the Montana Water Court, has learned the process for determining who owns rights to water can be extremely complicated.

MISSOULA – There’s an old saying in the West: Whisky is for drinking; water is for fighting over.

University of Montana third-year law student Brooke Reynolds is learning firsthand just how contentious water rights can be in Montana, serving this summer as an intern on the Montana Water Court.

Reynolds has learned in her short time on the court that water claims can stretch back decades, even to Montana’s statehood, and the process for determining who truly owns rights to a body of a water can be extremely complicated.

“There are a lot of nuances and paperwork involved. Some claims go back so far they are actually handwritten decrees,” Reynolds said. “We work to consolidate cases and quantify water claims. The state needs to determine where all the water is going.”

The court was created by the Montana Legislature in 1979 to adjudicate more than 219,000 state law-based water rights, as well as Indian and Federal reserved water rights claims made before 1973. The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation handles cases after 1973.

“Water law is a complex area and something you have to learn as you go,” said Professor Michelle Bryan, who teaches water law at UM’s Alexander Blewett III School of Law and calls Reynolds “impressive” in her enthusiasm for the subject, attention to detail and creativity. “The court has been excellent at mentoring students like Brooke, and we very much appreciate the ability they give them to learn about this important issue.”

For Reynolds, the attraction to water goes back to her days growing up in New Jersey – not exactly the landscape that seeded water rights during the Homestead Act.

“I get a lot of questions about that,” Reynolds said. “But my parents were public school teachers, and in the summer they worked as fly-fishing guides in Montana. It’s why they named
Those summers spent in resource-rich Montana instilled a passion for the state, and early in high school Reynolds developed an appreciation for the importance of water, particularly to the ranchers and farmers who depended on it for their livelihoods.

Her interest in the subject grew laser-focused, alongside her goal of attending law school to learn and ultimately practice environmental law. It led to her decision to get an environmental science degree from Montana State University. She chose MSU because her parents had moved permanently to Montana by then and “Bozeman was the closest big town,” Reynolds said.

When it came to applying to law school, there was one choice, she said.

“I applied only to UM’s law school, and I told them that in my application,” Reynolds said. “At the time, I had never been to Missoula, but I love living here now. Love it.”

Reynolds enrolled in UM’s unique joint degree program in law and public administration. The program allows students to complete both their J.D. and MPA in a shorter time period than if taken consecutively, and it prepares them for careers in government service that require specialized legal knowledge.

Reynolds will do a clinic rotation next year at the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and hopes one day to work for a government agency where she can combine her legal and administrative interests. She has two main goals for wherever she lands.

“I want to stay in Montana,” she said. “And, of course, I want to be a water lawyer.”

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UM Students Bring Music Education to Rural Schools

09 JUNE 2021
UM Students Bring Music Education to Rural Schools

UM School of Music alumni participate in the University’s Rural Outreach And Music program in Alberton School. ROAM connects UM music students and future music educators with rural Montana schools to provide a sampling of music education.

MISSOULA – There are now 54 open, full time jobs for music teachers in Montana listed on the Montana Office of Public Instruction jobs website.

The call for music educators comes from places like Fromberg, Belfry, Chester, Winnett and Box Elder across nearly every school district, grade range and band room under the Big Sky.

Music educators are so badly needed in Montana, that the Montana Rural Education Association reported that in the 2019-20 school year, 241 music positions were offered and 60 went unfilled.

“In almost every content area there’s a shortage when it comes to rural schools, but the need for music educators across Montana is at a crisis level in rural and non-rural districts,” said Dennis Parman, executive director of the MREA.

Parman credits wages, an increasing cost of living and licensing requirements as recruitment challenges, despite “school districts of any size wanting
music
programs for their students, parents and communities.”

So, when a group of University of Montana music students visited the Montana State Legislature to advocate for rural music education outreach, they were funded on the spot.

“I remember the group needing very little money to meet their fundraising goals, and their presentation was just so compelling,” Parman said.

The UM students proposed a program that connects rural schools with the transformative power of music called Rural Outreach And Music, or ROAM.

New UM School of Music alumni Rory Anderson, Skyler Genazzi, Connor Dennis and UM rising senior Alli High, all of whom are music education majors and ROAM members, packed up a sampling of wind and brass instruments last month and traveled to Alberton, Superior and Havre to visit K-12 students to share – and hopefully inspire – a love of music.

Together, the four future music teachers shared the light and airy notes of the flute, the bellowing of the sousaphone and trombone, and the melodic French horn as they played themes from popular movies, including “The Incredibles,” “Frozen,” “Up,” “Jurassic Park” and “Monster’s Inc.”

“Bigger things sound lower and smaller things sound higher,” instructed Genazzi, a music education and trumpet performance major, who will teach pre-K through grade 12 general music for Alberton School District next year.

When the theme to “Harry Potter” was played, nearly every hand in the bleachers went up to guess the tune. The same for the “Imperial March” from “Star Wars.” The gym’s lighting fixtures began to shake as every foot in the bleachers stomped to accompany Queen’s “We Will Rock You.” Dennis sang a bit of Aaron Copland’s “Zion’s Walls” and played a sampling of Dvořák’s “Largo” from Symphony No. 9, after explaining how the reed works on an oboe and why students should consider their voice as an instrument, too.

“Does anyone know what tool you need to have to play these instruments?” asked Anderson, from Missoula, who plans to teach music next year. “All you need is your own breath. That’s why they’re called the wind instruments; you’re using your own wind,” she said.
Skyler Genazzi, trumpet player and music educator, plays the trumpet for students in Alberton School as part of UM’s ROAM program. Genazzi will teach general music in the school district next year, as Montana faces a crisis in filling vacant music education jobs across the state.

When the quartet demonstrated percussion with drumsticks on the bottom of 5-gallon buckets and showed how to remove a mouthpiece from the trumpet to sound like a bazooka, an Alberton fifth-grader asked how they “got so good at music.”

“We practiced a lot,” said High, a flute major at UM. “You don’t get good at something unless you practice, but it was always fun for me because I met lots of friends in music and I got better little by little.”

With funding support from the MREA and the Frank Foundation, ROAM is committed to delivering a sampling of music education to rural schools and students. MREA provides a rural scholars program, which offers a scholarship for student teachers to teach in one of the organization’s member schools.

UM School of Music Director James Randall said the ROAM program is a great opportunity for UM music education students to give back and to share what they have learned with school districts around the state.

“For many of our students, it’s also a chance to consider what teaching in a rural community would be like,” he said. “So many of our students want to continue to live and work in Montana
and we prepare them for the unique opportunities and challenges presented in rural school districts. ROAM offers them the opportunity to teach and learn at the same time.”

Mica Clarkson, principal of Alberton School and UM education alumna, said she immediately said “yes” when ROAM offered to visit Alberton.

“Music is everything,” Clarkson said. “It’s creativity, history, analytical thinking and it’s constructive to every part of your life,” she said. “I look at music education as inspirational to every other subject. Kids need to be exposed to music.”

Multiple studies have touted the profits of a music education for primary students. The benefits include an enhanced development of young minds and increased memory, focus, reasoning skills and confidence; as well as reduced anxiety and stress. Other studies have shown a direct correlation between music education and increased aptitude in math and science.

Dennis, of Great Falls, graduated last month with a double major in music education (trombone) and music performance (voice). Dennis had two job interviews during the Alberton visit, and he ran up during a break in the program to interview in the school’s band room by telephone.

“It’s exciting to have the job security in this field,” he said. “The thing I’m most excited about is sharing my passion for music with students. I hope they’ll take advantage of the music program at UM and end up where I am today. That’s the goal.”

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Montana Leads Efforts to Define UN Ecosystem Restoration Principles

09 JUNE 2021
MISSOULA – University of Montana Professor Cara Nelson is leading an international effort to define guiding principles for a new United Nations initiative that aims to reverse the degradation of global ecosystems.

The UN launched its Decade on Ecosystem Restoration initiative June 4 with nine guiding principles for ecosystem restoration.

“The launch of the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration is an unparalleled opportunity to
advance ecosystem repair and improve human well-being,” said Nelson, a professor of restoration ecology in UM’s W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation. “These nine principles are intended to provide the global restoration community with clear guidelines for the design, implementation and monitoring of activities done under the Decade, so that these activities result in the highest possible level of net improvement for nature and people.”

The principles were developed as a collaborative effort by the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM), the Society for Ecological Restoration and the Best Practices Task Force of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

Other members of the leadership team include Jim Hallett, an affiliate professor in UM’s Department of Ecosystem and Conservation Sciences and chair of the Society of Ecological Restoration, and Bethanie Walder, the executive director of the society and a master’s degree alumna of UM’s Environmental Studies Program.

Ecosystem degradation and destruction are major environmental issues, said Nelson, who leads the IUCN CEM’s Ecosystem Restoration Thematic Group and is a member of the UN Decade’s Best Practices Task Force.

“Ecological restoration – assisting in the recovery of ecosystems that have been degraded or destroyed – is a key solution to these challenges, but repairing degraded ecosystems is complex,” she said. “Unless there is clear and adequate guidance on science, practice and policy, there’s risk that management activities intended to be restorative might not provide their intended benefits and instead could result in further degradation or inequitable social benefits.”

“There is no longer a question of whether restoration is needed,” said Christophe Besacier, a forestry officer with the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization. “It’s clear we cannot address the climate emergency without it. But this is the first time we have had common principles to ensure restoration is implemented in a manner that enhances both human and ecological conditions. This collaboration is a really important step forward for ecosystem restoration.”

In order to advance the scientific underpinning of ecosystem restoration, SER and IUCN CEM engaged 58 restoration experts from 23 countries and 42 organizations during the third Biennial Global Forum on Ecological Restoration in April.

These experts delivered initial recommendations for principles for ecosystem restoration.
Montana Leads Efforts to Define UN Ecosystem Restoration Principles

Nelson and Hallett, along with Andrea Romero Montoya, a consultant with the FAO’s Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism, Forestry Division, then led a seven-member team to refine the principles based on input received from UN Decade and Global Forum participants.

“To fulfill the ambitions of the UN Decade, the next 10 years must see a massive acceleration in the pace of global restoration activity,” Hallett said. “That’s why it is so important to have strong principles, sound science, engaged communities and a common understanding of the wide array of restorative activities that can heal the planet.”

Angela Andrade, chair of the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management, added: “The products of the Global Forum provide critical tools for practitioners, policymakers and investors to effectively design, implement and measure success in restoration across all ecosystems and scales. We are very excited about what this means for the UN Decade and ensuring that projects around the world are delivering a net gain for ecosystems, for biodiversity and for local communities.”

The principles were released this month during UN Decade Launch events. The principles are open for public consultation in June and July and will be finalized at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in September. Held once every four years, that event brings together several thousand leaders and decision-makers from government, civil society, indigenous peoples, business and academia with the goal of conserving the environment and harnessing the solutions nature offers to global challenges.

“Ecosystem restoration projects and programs in Montana face the same challenges as those in the rest of the world,” Nelson said. “The principles of ecosystem restoration were designed to apply to all ecological and social contexts – from grasslands of Montana to tropical marine biomes – and should help local restoration stakeholders across the globe navigate trade-offs between conservation of biological diversity and the ability of ecosystems to deliver goods and services for human well-being.”

The guiding principles follow. Ecosystem restoration:

- Promotes inclusive and participatory governance, social fairness and equity from the start and throughout the process and outcomes.

- Includes a continuum of restorative activities.
Montana Leads Efforts to Define UN Ecosystem Restoration Principles

Aims to achieve the highest level of recovery possible for ecosystem health and human well-being.

- Addresses drivers of ecosystem degradation.
- Incorporates all types of knowledge and promotes their exchange throughout the process.
- Is tailored to the local context, while considering the larger landscape or seascape, and social-ecological and culture settings.
- Is based on well-defined, short- and long-term ecological and socioeconomic objectives and goals.
- Plans and undertakes monitoring, evaluation and adaptive management throughout the lifetime of the project or program.
- Integrates policies and measures to ensure longevity, maintain funding and, where appropriate, enhance and scale up interventions.

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University of Montana logo

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MISSOULA – As tourism goes, 2020 will be a memorable year for only one thing—COVID-19’s detrimental impact on economies that depend on travel and tourism across the U.S. and world.

Montana was no exception as its out-of-state visitation was down about 12% over the previous year, said researchers at the University of Montana’s Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR). The state still fared much better than states like California, which saw a 55% reduction in travel-related spending according to the industry webpage of Visit California, where tourism is more heavily based on urban destinations, air traffic and international travelers.

“At the start of the pandemic, we expected to see substantial declines in spending from out-of-state travelers, but quickly realized a strong demand for people to drive and find wide open spaces, outdoor recreation opportunities and generally escape dense urban areas or destinations,” said ITRR Director Jeremy Sage. “We have a lot of that in Montana, and the secret is definitely out.”

However, not only did the 2020 total volume of visitors decrease to the lowest numbers in five years, but spending patterns of those arriving changed as well, resulting in a 16% overall reduction.

According to Sage, the distortions created from the pandemic were due to the decrease in restaurant capacities, closures of indoor spaces and activities in general. “This definitely had an effect on what and where people spent their travel dollars,” he said.

Despite the challenges, 11.1 million out-of-state visitors still contributed roughly $3.15 billion in travel-related spending to Montana’s economy during 2020. This spending directly supported nearly $2.6 billion in economic activity and nearly 31,000 state jobs, as well as indirectly supporting an additional $1.8 billion in economic activity and more than 12,400 additional jobs.
Looking back, 2020 started off on a strong footing, with a 9% increase in visitation in the first quarter of 2020 compared to 2019 and a 16% increase in spending by those visitors.

However, ITRR estimates reflect a 32% decrease in visitation and 50% decrease in traveler spending during the second quarter. While the state definitely saw a return of out-of-state visitors during the third quarter following the lifting of quarantines and stay-at-home orders, visitation and spending were still down slightly from the previous year – 4% and 5%, respectively. The last quarter of the year showed 14% fewer travelers and 28% less spending than during the same time period in 2019.

Even with the noted dips in overall visitation and spending, outdoor spaces such as state parks, national parks and campgrounds around the state were busier than ever during the second half of 2020 as pandemic-related travel restrictions and closures lifted.

Early indicators thus far in the spring 2021 point to more of the same for Montana’s busy travel season this year. It seems likely that the decreases seen in 2020 will be regained in 2021.

ITRR continues to collect data and release reports related to travel and tourism in the state throughout the year. The full report is available online, and all ITRR reports are available on the ITRR website.

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UM ‘Happiness Course’ a Bright Spot for Local Residents During Pandemic

04 JUNE 2021
MISSOULA – “Old age is not an easy road to travel in the best of times,” said 87-year-old Missoula resident Lidia Donahue.

But during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Donahue experienced what she calls a “bright spot” while enrolled in the Art and Science of Happiness course at the University of Montana.

The course, developed by UM counseling Professor John Sommers-Flanagan and Professor Emerita Rita Sommers-Flanagan, aims to help learners of all ages understand the myths and truths of a well-lived life. The goal at the conclusion of the course? Provide students with the education needed to develop a better map to pursue a happy life.

“I found the course interesting and rewarding far beyond my expectations,” said Donahue. “The multigenerational aspect of the participants was an important factor and an unexpected bonus. Listening to and interacting with so many different people with so many backgrounds was stimulating.”

That multigenerational dynamic was exactly what John Sommers-Flanagan had in mind when he decided to open the course to the community last year. Through the help of UM Online, Sommers-Flanagan was able to teach the class remotely during the spring semester with 30 traditional UM students and 20 community participants.

“Words are inadequate to express my gratitude for the happiness class,” said Missoula attorney Torian Donohoe. “The class literally transformed my life after a very difficult and sad nine months. Plus, it was a heck of a lot of fun.”

Sommers-Flanagan constructed the class to encourage participants to engage in activities that stimulate happiness. Rather than a lecture, he organized the class around what he calls “happiness labs,” where each week the focus would shift to a new core research study and dissect how students can apply that data to real life.
Rooted in the seven life dimensions through which people often experience happiness and sadness, Sommers-Flanagan emphasized goal-setting and the importance of developing effective plans to achieve personal goals.

Students were asked to complete minor assignments each week to help determine what intervention worked best for them in order to incorporate happiness into their daily lives. Sommers-Flanagan said many students found that injecting things like positive music, gratitude assignments, writing about difficult emotions, acts of kindness, savoring and methods of meditation and relaxation helped students understand how to achieve their best possible self.

At a time when people are experiencing less happiness, more depression and higher rates of suicide, he hopes the Art and Science of Happiness course will help his students outline the simple steps that can be taken to get more happiness in their daily lives.

Donahue agrees.

“I have to say I feel a major shift in my thinking, I am now more focused on gratitude and living in the moment and have developed an unexpected confidence about facing the inevitable challenges that lie ahead, a confidence that even others have noticed,” she said.

UM students or community members interested in enrolling in UM’s Art and Science of Happiness course can sign up for the class again in the spring 2022 semester. The public is also invited to enroll in a similar happiness class from UM Ph.D. student Daniel Salois beginning on July 12.

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UM ‘Happiness Course’ a Bright Spot for Local Residents During Pandemic
Bankruptcy Judge Helps UM Law Students Gain Practical Experience
MISSOULA – At the University of Montana’s Alexander Blewett III School of Law, students gain real-world legal experience on their paths to earning their Juris Doctors. For a select number each semester, that experience comes in the form of individualized practical training with the Honorable Benjamin Hursh of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Montana.

Just a few years ago, shortly after the judge was appointed to the bench, Hursh became involved in supervising the bankruptcy clinic at UM’s law school, sharing with students his enthusiasm and giving them insight into the area of bankruptcy law. In the spring of 2021, he also began teaching the school’s bankruptcy class.

“My interest in supervising the clinic and teaching the bankruptcy class reflects my strong belief that I would not have the privilege of serving on the bench if it had not been for innumerable people who made investments in me as a student when I attended law school at the University of Montana and later as an attorney,” Hursh said. “By teaching and supervising the clinic, I hope I can contribute something to the students’ education and professional development in the same way that so many contributed to mine.”

With the assistance of Jonathon Byington, a UM professor of law and associate dean of academic affairs, Hursh developed an oral argument assignment at the end of the semester. The goal was to give students an opportunity to venture into the courtroom and make an argument under the same conditions they will encounter in practice.

Prior to the oral argument, Hursh provided students with the actual briefs that were filed with the Court framing several legal issues involving an objection to a proof of claim. Next, the judge provided the audio file for the actual evidentiary hearing that took place in the case and the exhibits that were introduced at the hearing.

The assignment instructions explained that a brief recess was requested and granted at the conclusion of the hearing, and counsel would be afforded the opportunity to make a brief argument to the court following the recess.
The students served as counsel for the creditor in the assignment, each presenting their argument to the Court. At the conclusion of each argument, Hursh provided students with comments on what he thought they did well, as well as constructive criticism.

“\text{I really enjoyed that it was focused more on the practice than on the heady doctrinal aspects of bankruptcy law,}” said Peter Yould, a student in Hursh’s bankruptcy class and recent UM graduate. “This helped to keep the class discussions interesting and the coursework engaging. The oral argument in court as the experiential capstone to the class really revived my interest in litigation.”

“As a student, some of the most valuable law school experiences I had were the practical skills exercises, including the oral argument in appellate advocacy,” said Hursh. “I can remember a key point in the argument I presented, but I cannot remember any exam I took. As a result, I wanted to include a similar component in the bankruptcy class.”

Like the bankruptcy class, practical experience is also key in the bankruptcy clinic Hursh supervises.

“The emphasis in the clinic is on developing skills and habits that will serve the student well in any firm or chambers the student may find themselves in,” said Hursh. “I work directly with each student and do my best to mentor the student in the clinic the same way I would mentor an associate in practice.”

At the beginning of the clinic, Hursh asks students to identify specific goals for themselves. If they express an interest in receiving constructive criticism on their writing and analysis, Hursh asks students to draft bench memoranda. In other circumstances, he might request a concise summary of pertinent information – or “cheat sheet” – to use during hearings and then redline the students’ drafts and walk through the rationale for each change with them.

“To date, I think each student’s experience has been unique, in part because no two students begin the clinic with the same skill set,” said Hursh.

“For me, the entire clinic experience clerking with Judge Hursh and the bankruptcy court was one of my best experiences in law school, primarily because of Judge Hursh himself,” said Rob Joki, a recent bankruptcy clinic student and 2021 law graduate. “Despite the judge’s busy schedule, he spent a significant amount of time working one-on-one with me, discussing the
issues raised before the court, providing critical feedback on my work and giving me general professional guidance for after law school. It was also nice to engage the bankruptcy code with real-time events and to see it in action, as it provided a perspective that is often hard to see from the books and the case law.

“I will be working in the bankruptcy field after law school,” Joki said. “I have a job lined up with Crowley Fleck and their banking and finance and creditor rights practice group in Billings. Bankruptcy will not be the only area of the law I will be working in. However, my ultimate career goal is to eventually focus predominately on bankruptcy.”

Since fall 2018, Hursh has mentored 10 students over six semesters. Five of the 10 are actively working in the bankruptcy practice area.

“While I am pleased by that, I want my clinic students to find the practice area or specialty that they find most rewarding and spend a career doing their best work in that area for their clients,” the judge said.

For more information, visit the Blewett School of Law website at https://www.umt.edu/law.

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**Contact:** Andi Armstrong, director of marketing and communications, 406-243-6509, andrea.armstrong@umontana.edu.
MISSOULA – Student entrepreneurs from across the state will meet in Missoula this fall for the University of Montana’s John Ruffatto Business Startup Challenge. The 32nd annual event, presented by the UM College of Business and Blackstone LaunchPad & Techstars, will take place in person from 5 to 7 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 8.

The competition, sponsored by Ontra Marketing Group and Missoula Economic Partnership, is open to any student enrolled in higher education across Montana, and provides more than $50,000 in prize money to students who pitch their business ideas to a panel of judges.

Applications to compete in the fall 2021 event are currently being accepted. However, competitors are encouraged to reach out to the UM Blackstone LaunchPad this summer to solidify business ideas and obtain assistance on submitting applications before the Sept. 8 deadline.

Businesses, organizations and individuals committed to the future of entrepreneurship in Montana provide all of the prize money for the event and participate as judges. Competitors pitch a vast array of venture ideas, with previous winning concepts including filtering brewery waste water with mushrooms and cricket farms for edible protein.

Finalists represent multiple Montana higher education institutions and pursue a range of majors, from business, psychology and journalism, to chemistry and natural resource
conservation. Teams also have the unique opportunity to present and network with business professionals and community leaders attending the final round presentations.

“While COVID has presented wide-ranging challenges for businesses across Montana, we’ve not seen a let up in new entrepreneurial ideas and ingenuity,” said Blackstone LaunchPad Director Paul Gladen. “We’re excited to see the student ventures applying to be part of this year’s competition.”

Now in its third decade, challenge finalists include a number of established Montana businesses, including Five on Black Brazilian Grill, Market on Front, Morphose Exercise Systems, GeoFli and Big Sky Brewing.

Ticket sales to attend the live public final found presentations will be available online in the near future.

For more information visit the John Ruffatto Business Startup Challenge webpage. For questions regarding the competition email Paul Gladen at paul.gladen@umontana.edu or call 406-243-5723.

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**Contact:** Paul Gladen, Blackstone Launchpad director, 406-243-5723, paul.gladen@umontana.edu.
UM Business Startup Challenge Returns, Applications Due This Summer
MontanaPBS Barn Documentary Earns National Award

02 JUNE 2021
MISSOULA – The Montana PBS documentary “Keeping the Barn” has received a 2021 Silver Telly Award in the Television: General Documentary category.

Produced by John Twiggs, “Keeping the Barn” revealed the rich heritage and stories connected to the barns of Montana.

“I’m honored to receive this prestigious award for our documentary about a unique part of Montana’s history,” Twiggs said. “We’re so glad we were able to tell these stories as Montanans are struggling to preserve the historic barns.”

“Keeping the Barn” follows the Brouwer family near Manhattan, as they struggle with the cost and complication of fixing the roof on their barn. They discover it is no easy task maintaining their piece of history. During their journey to repair the barn, the program also features Montana families from the mountains of the southwest to the prairies of the northeast as they try to maintain their historic structures. There even are some quick visits to some of Montana’s more unusual barns.

“Ultimately, they all have one thing in common,” Twiggs said. “Their personal stories reflect the meaning and nostalgia of these beautiful buildings.”

Twiggs has more than 30 years experience documenting Montana history with award-winning programs such as “Evelyn Cameron: Pictures from a Worthy Life” and “Playing for the World: The 1904 Fort Shaw Indian Girls’ Basketball Team.”

Tellys are the premier awards honoring video and television across all screens. Established in 1979, The Telly Awards attract more than 12,000 entries from all 50 states and five continents.
MontanaPBS Barn Documentary Earns National Award

Other winners in the category included ESPN, Smithsonian Channel, PBS, Florentine Films and more. For a complete list of this year’s Telly Awards for Television: General Documentary, go to https://www.tellyawards.com/winners/2021/television/general-documentary.

Entrants are judged by the Telly Awards Judging Council – an industry body of over 200 leading experts, including advertising agencies, production companies and major television networks and includes executives from Dow Jones, Duplass Brothers Productions, Complex Networks, A&E Networks, Hearst Media, ESPN Films, RYOT, Vice+ and Vimeo.

View “Keeping the Barn” online at https://www.montanapbs.org/programs/keepingthebarn/.

MontanaPBS (KUFM-TV in Missoula, KUSM-TV in Bozeman, KUKL-TV in Kalispell, KBGS-TV in Billings, KUGF-TV in Great Falls and KUHM-TV in Helena) is a service of the University of Montana and Montana State University. For more information, visit http://www.montanapbs.org.

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Contact: John Twiggs, MontanaPBS producer, 406-243-4565, john.twiggs@umontana.edu.
Five UM Students Land Gilman Scholarships for Education Adventures Abroad
MISSOULA – The world awaits for five outstanding University of Montana students, who recently were awarded Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarships. The prestigious awards help students fund study or internships abroad.

The UM 2021 Gilman Scholars are Alec Bartell, a freshman from Lynchburg, Virginia, bound for Japan; Rosamond Ferguson, a junior from Helena heading to Norway; Lucy Rath, a freshman from Bozeman who will study in Ireland; Anya Smith, a senior from Ronan also departing for the Emerald Isle; and Jewel Wicks, a junior from Inverness bound for Korea.

Four of the students will experience other cultures in Asia and Europe during the fall semester, and each will receive $4,000 for expenses. Bartell earned $8,000 to live abroad in Japan for an entire academic year.

“These are competitive awards that help our students gain international experience, which can be critically important to their academic and career development,” said Kylla Benes, UM director of prestigious scholarship and fellowships. “The fact that UM earned five Gilmans this year truly highlights the academic excellence of our students.”

Alec Bartell

After hiking the 2,200-mile Appalachian Trail, Bartell came to UM to major in both philosophy and English/creative writing. He will attend Tohoku University in Japan, where he will hone his Japanese while taking courses on Asian and Western philosophy, as well as Japanese literature.

“Studying writing in a culture that views the merits of literature different from the ones I grew up reading will
be a transformative element during this foundational part of my writing career,” Bartell said.

He said earning the scholarship was important because it enables students paying their own way through college to contribute to a globalizing conversation.

“Oftentimes, opportunities like studying abroad are locked behind monetary numbers incomprehensible to students paying their own way, like myself,” Bartell said. “Public programs like the Gilman’s scholarship switch the narrative. With this scholarship I am enabled a wider perspective – one I cannot gain solely in Montana.”

Rosie Ferguson

**Ferguson** majors in journalism, with a minor in environmental studies. She will attend the Artic University of Norway in Tromsø, which is the northernmost university in the world.

She intends to take classes on arctic oceanic ecology and climate, international environmental law, Sami indigenous peoples and arctic archaeology, bridging the gaps between the sciences and the humanities.

“Some of these courses have incredible opportunities to study climate change from a lens we don’t have in Montana, such as exploring the ocean’s immense role in our climate from the deck of a boat,” Ferguson said. “It
was important for me to earn the Gilman scholarship because it’s reassuring that there are groups that acknowledge the importance of supporting students as the costs associated with our education rise.

“I believe international education in particular encourages a deeper understanding and compassion for the lives and cultures of others,” she said. “Hopefully, it will also help us fully recognize the weight of climate change and explore our potential options for how the world can collectively move forward.”

Lucy Rath

Rath majors in cultural anthropology and has two minors: international relations and film/cinema studies. At UM, she made the choice to study anthropology, international development, global leadership and documentary filmmaking – subjects that will allow her to connect with the world and tell meaningful stories.

She will use her Gilman award to attend University College Cork in Ireland, which attracted her with its concentration in ethnography and offerings in ethnographic fieldwork.

“I’m eager to combine my passions with my education to discover the world beyond the mountains of my hometown and guarantee my success as an international student,” Rath said. “After talking with my study abroad adviser and learning about potential scholarships – especially the Gilman – I was inspired to apply for financial support. Receiving the Gilman will allow me to focus on my studies and less about money while in Ireland, and I am incredibly grateful for that.”

Anya Smith

Smith majors in anthropology with a minor in public health. She also will use her Gilman Scholarship to attend University College Cork in Ireland.

She said delving into the culture of Ireland will help her gain a broader understanding of the human experience.
and help her pursue a professional career in screenwriting. She said her anthropology degree would feel incomplete without the experience of living in a foreign country.

In particular, Smith is excited to take a class in Ireland that focuses on the important rituals and celebrations in Irish culture.

“Learning about ritual is a gateway to learning about healing,” she said. “Ritual is often an important part of the healing process. This class will go toward my degree concentration in medical anthropology, as ritual is often an important part of the healing process.”

When she applied to study abroad in Ireland, Smith wasn’t entirely sure how she would pay for it.

“Studying abroad has always been my dream, and I wasn't going to let financial concerns stop me,” she said. “Earning this scholarship makes a massive difference for the feasibility of my study abroad trip to Ireland.”

Wicks majors in psychology, with two minors: global public health and international relations. She plans to study in Seoul, South Korea. She intends to study the LGBTQ+ community in Korea and why suicide remains the highest-leading cause for death among South Korean youth. She said young people in Montana and South Korea experience similar mental health issues.

“I feel a keen sense of curiosity to find out what factors South Korea and Montana have in common to create this environment where suicide rates and mental health stigma thrive, when in reality they are diverse in culture, language and location when compared to each other,” she said.

Wicks is excited to start her adventure this fall.
“To grow up in a town of 100 and then go to Seoul, South Korea, for a semester surrounded by the skyscrapers and Buddhist temples will be a dream come true,” she said.

Since its inception in 2001, the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program has enabled students of limited financial means to study or intern abroad, providing them skills critical to our national security and economic prosperity. The program is administered by the Institute of International Education. Students are encouraged to complete a follow-up project related to their Gilman experience when they return to the United States.

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**Contact:** Kylla Benes, UM director of scholarships and fellowships, 406-243-5241, kylla.benes@mso.umt.edu.
Five UM Students Land Gilman Scholarships for Education Adventures Abroad