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Launch UM virtual tour.
MISSOULA – The University of Montana will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the passage of Title IX with a series of events to celebrate equality, access and justice.
“The passage of Title IX in 1972 created educational opportunity for women not previously guaranteed by federal law,” said Alicia Arant, UM equal opportunity director and Title IX coordinator. “Over the past 50 years, the aspiration of Title IX has evolved from equal access to education to creating a culture of equity within education. Next week’s events encourage us to reflect upon the incredible impact of 50 years of Title IX, evaluate the law against current needs and challenges in higher ed, and envision how we might administer Title IX over the next 50 years.”

Beginning Wednesday, Nov. 2, and running through Friday, Nov. 4, UM will host its annual DiverseU symposium to recognize this important anniversary. The event will culminate with keynote presentations from Arant and UM law student Danielle Pease at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 3, in the University Center Ballroom. A complete agenda of the DiverseU symposium can be found online.

At 7 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 3, at the Adams Center, the Grizzly volleyball team will host Portland State University. Grizzly Athletics is sponsoring a Title IX promotion that provides fans with the opportunity to purchase two game tickets for $9. Tickets for the match can be purchased online through GrizTix.

During the Grizzly football game on Saturday, Nov. 5, against California Polytechnic State University, Grizzly Athletics will show a video on Griz Vision to recognize the transformation Title IX has provided to college athletics and UM.

Through innovative initiatives like S.E.A. Change, UM has been a national leader on the advancement of equal opportunity and a force for positive social change since the passage of Title IX of the Education Act of 1972.

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Contact: Dave Kuntz, UM director of strategic communication, 406-243-5659, dave.kuntz@umontana.edu.
UM to Commemorate 50th Anniversary of Title IX with Series of Events
MISSOULA – Before their football teams clash in the state’s biggest game of the year, the University of Montana in Missoula and Montana State University in Bozeman once again will compete in a food drive to benefit area charities.

Now in its 23rd year, UM’s Can the Cats Food Drive launches Saturday, Nov. 5, and will run until the Griz-Cat game on Saturday, Nov. 19, in Bozeman, when the food drive winner will be announced.
“We need everyone to help us can those Cats!” said Kat Cowley, who directs Associated Students of UM Bear Necessities and the UM Food Pantry. “The benefits of this yearly competition cannot be overstated. Every year, Can the Cats provides local food banks and pantries with increased abundance. Last year, the UM and Missoula communities donated nearly 600,000 pounds.”

In Missoula, proceeds are split between the Missoula Food Bank & Community Center and the UM Food Pantry. All food donated on campus benefits the food pantry, while monetary donations and food collected off campus go to the Missoula Food Bank.

This year, the food bank, the food pantry, Clearwater Credit Union and other community partners hope to Can the Cats with a donation goal of 450,000 pounds. All donations collected in the Missoula area during the drive stay local. More information about Can the Cats, including participating businesses and drop-off locations, is available online at https://bit.ly/CanCats22.

On the UM campus, look for plastic bins labeled “Donate Here.” The campus community also can donate money or dining plan funds (where accepted) at all Campus Dining locations, as well as UM concession stands during games. UM also has fun competitions planned involving cooking, Tetris, UM eSports and more.

Interested in getting involved? On Saturday, Nov. 12, Bear Necessities at UM is looking for volunteers to help collect food donations from 12:30 to 2 p.m. at the Griz game against Eastern Washington. Sign up for a shift on Signup Genius, and don’t hesitate to reach out to the ASUM Bear Necessities office with any questions at 406-243-2017.

###

Contact: Kat Cowley, director, UM Bear Necessities, 406-243-2017, kat.cowley@mso.umt.edu; Kenzie Carter, program coordinator, Bear Necessities and UM Food Pantry, 406-243-4331, kenzie.carter@mso.umt.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
UM Grant Aims to Improve Montana’s Maternal Care

Dr. Annie Glover, a Rural Institute senior research scientist, helped land a $1.4 million federal grant to improve maternal care across Montana.

MISSOULA – The University of Montana recently was awarded a $1.4 million federal grant to improve the maternal mortality rate across Big Sky Country and especially among rural Native American populations.

The five-year Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant went to UM’s Rural Institute for
Inclusive Communities, which has promoted equal opportunities for people with disabilities and others since 1978.

“The maternal mortality rate in the United States is higher than any other industrialized nation, and the U.S. is one of just a couple of nations whose rate has increased in recent years,” said Dr. Annie Glover, a Rural Institute senior research scientist. “I am very excited to receive this award, as it gives us the opportunity to partner with Montana’s incredibly dedicated healthcare providers to apply the latest evidence-based clinical practices to change the ways our systems are delivering maternity care across the state.”

Native people have a two to three times higher risk of dying from a pregnancy-related cause than white mothers, Glover said.

“A lot of work is being done to better understand what is driving these numbers,” she said. “This grant provides Montana with the opportunity to step into a national leadership role where we adapt evidence-based solutions developed in higher-resourced and higher-population areas to our very unique, rural communities.”

Glover said Montana faces multiple challenges in providing maternal healthcare. Pregnancies happen in all 56 counties, but only 26 hospitals have a birthing unit. Families often must drive hundreds of miles to reach prenatal, delivery and postpartum care.

“We also have significant human resource challenges,” she said. “There simply aren’t enough physicians and nurses available to staff labor and delivery units in every community that needs one, and rural isolation creates clinical skill and resource gaps. And these issues are compounded by the historical trauma and systemic racism faced by Montana’s Indigenous population.”

Glover said the new grant specifically targets severe maternal morbidity in delivery rooms and aims to improve clinicians’ ability to recognize serious complications early and respond rapidly with appropriate interventions to prevent further complications and death.

Each month facilities will gather virtually to work through evidence-based ways to improve care. Hospitals will share their successes and challenges with their peer facilities across the state and gain access to clinical experts across the nation. This work will be facilitated by Yarrow, a Montana-based public health consulting organization.
To provide guidance to the project, the Montana Department of Public Health and Human services will convene multiple high-level partners such as the Montana Hospital Association and Montana Perinatal Association, as well as other leading clinical organizations. Additionally, various Indian Health Service units, urban Indian health centers, and the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council, will be invited to take a leadership role to ensure the collaborative meets the needs of Montana’s indigenous communities, both rural and urban.

The grant also will allow Glover and her colleagues to move upstream and work with primary care providers and improve clinical practices. “The goal is to help prevent pregnancy complications before they become life-threatening,” she said.

During the past year, DPHHS, UM and Yarrow piloted the initiative the grant will fund in 17 birthing hospitals across Montana to improve obstetric hemorrhage. “And despite facing unprecedented staffing and resource challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, the nurses and physicians dedicated an extraordinary amount of time and energy into clinical quality improvement,” Glover said.

The grant is part of the Whitehouse Blueprint for Addressing Maternal Health Care. UM also has awards meant to improve maternal mortality through the CDC ERASE program, Health Resources & Services Administration support for Montana Obstetrics & Maternal Support, and the Alliance for Innovation and Maternal Health program through the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

###

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Launch UM virtual tour.
MISSOULA – For a researcher who studies wildfire, University of Montana graduate student Kyra Clark-Wolf couldn’t have had better timing.

Clark-Wolf arrived in Missoula to start her graduate studies on the impacts of wildfires on forests at the W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation on July 4, 2017. Eleven days
later, a lightning strike sparked the Lolo Peak Fire just south of the city, burning nearly 54,000 acres and leaving lasting and indelible images among Missoulians of dense smoke and flames visible from town.

The impacts of that fire on the forest, as well as the Sunrise Fire burning at the same time west of Missoula, would go on to be central to Clark-Wolf’s doctoral work. Her findings are shared in two papers, the second recently published in *Forest Ecology and Management*, a leading journal in her field.

“I was curious once the smoke cleared up what was going on in the forest and what the fires left behind,” she said, “and how the effects of ongoing climate change could change forest recovery.”

With support from her adviser, Philip Higuera, professor and director of UM’s PaleoEcology and Fire Ecology Lab, and Kim Davis, a UM research scientist, Clark-Wolf applied for $25,000 in research funding from the federal Joint Fire Science Program and proposed to study how burned landscapes find life again.

She chose the Lolo Peak and Sunrise fires for the very practical reason that both were close by, and for the next three years her research would require endless road trips, arduous hikes and hours spent counting tiny tree seedlings and measuring their growth.
Her laboratories were 69 field plots staked out at mountain locations far from roads and recreational sites. Her subjects were the thousands of tiny tree seedlings she marked and followed over the years. She also tracked the "micro-site" conditions where those seedlings grew.

“We wanted to see how warm and dry it gets right at the ground surface, and what was happening with the soils,” she said of her research, which included help from a number of undergraduate students. “Soil conditions are important because that’s where plants get moisture and nutrients like nitrogen.”

Her studies found thousands of seedlings growing after the fires, especially at sites with cooler, damper conditions – often found in the shade of the dead trees and upper canopy, as well as on the north side of mountains with higher elevations and more undergrowth. She found fewer seedlings at sites with less shade and drier, hotter conditions.

In the case of the Lolo Peak and Sunrise fires, moderate temperatures and ample rain in the years since the fires helped seedlings get started and survive in the burned areas, but as climate change continues, Clark-Wolf said, weather conditions might not be so favorable for young seedlings in the future.

“This study offers a bit of good news,” said Higuera. “It wasn’t a given to find so many seedlings after these wildfires. Across the West, there is a trend toward fewer seedlings growing after wildfires, in part because of warmer and drier summers. Fortunately, these forests seem to be regenerating much like they have in the past, at least for now.”

The results from Clark-Wolf’s study suggest steps forest managers might take to promote regrowth, such as leaving burned trees standing. Her findings can also help replanting efforts to focus on areas where its most needed, including those locations far from potential seed sources.

“Burnt trees all over the place look ugly to many people,” she said, “but they serve important functions. One is providing shading; another is attracting wood boring beetles, which bring in birds like woodpeckers.”

Burnt trees can also be a source for seeds.
“Lodgepole pine cones stay up in the canopy, sealed up with resin, and when fire comes through it melts that resin and releases seeds. So even if the tree dies, its seeds are released for the next generation,” she said. “It’s just a sea of seedlings up there now.”

“It’s a nice reminder that while severe fires are impactful for people,” Clark-Wolf said, “these forests have been experiencing fires for thousands of years and at least for now they are pretty good at coming back.”

###

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Launch UM virtual tour.
UM's new Office of Health Research & Partnership will work to improve health care in underserved parts of rural Montana.

(Photo of Avon, Montana, by Rick and Susie Graetz)

MISSOULA – The University of Montana recently secured $5.1 million in federal grants from the Health Resource and Service Administration, leading to the formation of a new UM Office
$5M Funding, New UM Research Office to Boost Montana Rural Health

The office will use the HRSA funding for programs to bolster the health care workforce and increase access to quality health care in rural and underserved parts of Montana.

“Communities across Montana are facing difficulty in providing quality health care,” said Scott Whittenburg, UM vice president for research and creative scholarship. “Issues such as substance use disorders, adverse childhood events and chronic disease are particularly challenging. In a diverse and largely rural state like Montana, resources vary widely from community to community. This new office will work with local communities to begin tackling pressing health care challenges.”

The OHRP office is based in Whittenburg’s research administration sector at UM. The office will oversee collaborative and innovative health care-related initiatives, both on campus and with external partners across the state.

The first and largest HRSA grant – nearly $3 million from the Community Health Worker Training Program – will train new and existing community health workers across the state. The training program will expand the public health workforce, increase community health worker employment readiness and enhance the skills of workers to effectively address community health needs

“We will expand and extend Montana’s public health workforce while advancing health equity and supporting underserved communities,” said Kate Chapin, director of the UM Center for Children, Families and Workforce Development.

The effort is a partnership with the new OHRP office, the UM School of Public Health and Community Health Sciences, and the UM Center for Children, Families and Workforce Development (CCFWD).

“We will develop new curriculum and training that will be deployed via CCFWD’s eLearning platform,” Chapin said. “This project will collaborate with several different stakeholders, including Logan Health, Montana Pediatrics, the Montana Primary Care Association, Montana’s Peer Network, Blackfeet Tribal Health and Catalyst for Change.”

The second HRSA grant is $2 million. It will create a demonstration site for a program titled Enhancing Systems for Care for Children with Medical Complexity. Partners in the effort
include the OHRP office, the UM Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities, the UM Center for Population Health Research and Montana Pediatrics.

UM and Montana Pediatrics have partnered to develop a model to improve care for children with medical complexity – those who are medically fragile and have intensive care needs. The new model uses the expansion of telemedicine to support parents, caregivers and providers to improve health equity.

“With the use of the telemedicine network – delivered by statewide pediatric experts – families can obtain wraparound health care services in an entirely new way that meets them where they are, reducing the time and monetary costs of travel,” said Jim Caringi, a UM public health professor. “The project will bring pediatric expertise to children who may otherwise have no access to pediatric care, enacting a family centered care-coordination model. This will support and complement Montana’s existing pediatric primary care and pediatric workforce.”

The third grant was funded by the HRSA Rural Health Network Development Planning Program. This $100,000 planning grant will develop a UM Health extension office network in western Montana based on a successful model now used in New Mexico.

“The ultimate goal of this planning grant is to design a health extension office model for the west side of the state that will strengthen local capacity in rural communities by connecting resources at UM to the needs of those communities,” said Lily Apedaile, the health workforce innovation director for UM Health & Medicine.

Partners in this third project will include the OHRP office; the Center for Children, Families and Workforce Development; the Western Montana Area Health Education Center; St. Luke Community Healthcare; the Lake County Health Department; Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes Tribal Health; Logan Health; and the Flathead City-County Health Department.

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Launch UM virtual tour.
UM / News / Video Telehealth Site for Veterans Opens at UM

Patrick Beckwith directs UM Military and Veteran Services, which will host one of two VA video telehealth sites in Montana.

MISSOULA – The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has opened a new video telehealth site at the University of Montana designed to help student and faculty member veterans receive convenient VA care.

UM will house one of two Montana Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations (ATLAS) sites on its Missoula campus at the Military and Veterans Services Office, located at 1000 E. Beckwith Ave. The state’s other ATLAS site is at Montana State University in Bozeman.
“This is groundbreaking,” said Pat Beckwith, director of UM Military and Veteran Services. “No other universities in the nation provide VA telehealth services like this on their campuses. We are excited for this opportunity. It’s an innovative and collaborative way to better serve our military-affiliated students and staff.”

Beckwith said the ATLAS site will assist the 1,400 military-affiliated students who attend UM, which this year earned a Gold ranking for being a Military Friendly School from MilitaryFriendly.com.

“We appreciate the VA selecting our campus for this service,” said UM President Seth Bodnar, himself a military veteran. “We are working toward becoming the most military- and veteran-friendly campus in the nation, and this helps us build momentum toward that goal.”

ATLAS provides comfortable, private spaces equipped with high-speed internet access, site attendant support and the technology needed for video telehealth visits through VA Video Connect, VA’s secure videoconferencing app. The ATLAS sites give student and faculty veterans enrolled in VA care through the Montana VA Health Care System the option to connect with their VA providers at either campus.

ATLAS enables VA to provide services that do not require hands-on exams. These services include mental health appointments, nutrition counseling, select primary care visits and social work assistance. The sites eliminate potential barriers to care such as long travel times, transportation costs and poor internet connectivity – particularly in remote areas.

“One in 10 Montanans are veterans,” said Judy Hayman, the Montana VA executive director. “Across Montana, we have seen the power of partnerships to help connect veterans to the services they have earned. Our partners at (UM and MSU) are a strong example of how Montanans innovate to support our Veterans.”

Veterans who want to schedule an appointment at either Montana ATLAS site can call 877-468-8387. To learn more about the ATLAS site at UM, visit Military and Veteran Services Office at the University of Montana. For more on the ATLAS pilot program, visit the VA Office of Connected Care website.

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Video Telehealth Site for Veterans Opens at UM

Contact: Patrick Beckwith, director, UM Military and Veteran Services Office, 406-243-2744, patrick.beckwith@mso.umt.edu.
UM wildlife researchers Jon McRoberts (left), Joshua Millspaugh and Jonathan Karlen spent the summer reviewing hunting regulations from all 50 states to help simply sometimes complicated rules.
MISSOULA – Coming in at a weighty 143 pages, Montana’s 2022 book of deer, elk and antelope hunting regulations is an impressive tome listing license costs, permit drawing stats, season start dates, tag requirements and the ominous penalties for breaking any of its stated rules.

It’s a valuable resource in the management of the state’s beloved big game animals and a must read for hunters heading out into the field, but it also can be an intimidating opus for even the most experienced hunter, never mind newbies to the sport.

This summer, wildlife researchers at the University of Montana’s W. A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation spent hours reviewing hunting regulations for all 50 states with a goal of recommending how to simplify and streamline rules often laden with jargon and geography.

“Actually, Montana has done a nice job with its regulations,” said Jon McRoberts, administrator of UM’s Boone and Crocket Wildlife Conservation Program and one of the researchers on the project. “You can tell very clearly the rules were driven by wildlife management in a very big state. The eastern half, as we all know, looks very different from the western half.”

The team’s work was made possible through a grant from the Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports, a national nonprofit dedicated to promoting the growth of hunting and providing education on the contributions made by hunters to wildlife conservation. Its work, along with the Boone and Crocket Club and other hunting organizations, comes at a time of continuing declines in the number of hunters in the U.S. These declines not only hinder conservation policies but also impact revenue brought to states through licensing and recreational income.

“Through our discussions with the council, we realized hunting regulation complexity could be a barrier to new hunters,” McRoberts said. “And the majority of current hunters are honest ethical people, and the fear of doing something wrong unintendedly could keep some from expanding their hunting.”

The realm of hunting is admittedly vast – some Eastern states don’t allow Sunday hunting, Hawaii has no duck season – so to put “rails on their analysis,” as McRoberts put it, the team looked specifically at modern firearm regulations, upland game birds, waterfowl and deer.

Although narrowed considerably, their study still encompassed more than 225 regulation
Hunting Regulations: UM Wildlife Researchers Seek to Clarify the Complicated

“We looked at if you need to carry proof of hunter education in the field, are there fee discounts for veterans, what are the licenses needed for private landowners and what meats are you are required to remove from the field?” McRoberts said, noting that Alaska requires hunters to remove meat between an animal’s ribs, while other states do not.

“Our job with this review was not to tell states what they needed to do but to offer ideas on what they could do to make hunting more accessible, particularly to new hunters,” said Joshua Millspaugh, Boone and Crockett Professor of Wildlife Conservation, who led and participated in the review.

Because printed books would have presented a mountain of paper, the source material for the study came primarily from each state’s online sites, which varied wildly in ease of use and presentation, said Jonathan Karlen, a Boone and Crockett Wildlife Conservation Fellow.

“Every state does it differently,” he said. “Some just publish a PDF; others have a more interactive web page where you click what you want to hunt and it takes you from there.”

The bulk of existing complexity Karlen noted came down to three factors: time, place and species.

“The states that had vastly different sets of regulations were those with different zones, dates and huntable species,” he said, adding that Texas, for example, has deer regulations specific to each of its 254 counties. “If you are a new hunter, you might be in the right place to hunt, but you might be there at the wrong time.”

Each state’s composition of public land is another aspect that can add to hunter confusion, as can levels of access to hunting on property owned by others.

The researchers are quick to note that many if not most hunting regulations were written to serve a need at some point in the past – a deer rifle in Idaho has to be less than 16 pounds – and other rules will always remain in flux due to wildlife population health and diversity.

“We’re not saying any complexity is bad because it does come from a management need,” McRoberts said. “Our work was about finding outliers of complexity and looking at it on a
The team’s completed report will be important for the Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports to begin communications with states about where they fall in the continuum of regulation complexity, while offering steps they might take to streamline their rules without compromising wildlife conservation and hunter ethics.

“My expectation is our report will be a guide for us to do even more,” said McRoberts, an avid hunter himself. “We hope it does some good and encourages more people to take up hunting.”

Contact: Dave Kuntz, UM director of strategic communications, 406-243-5659, dave.kuntz@umontana.edu.
UM’s SARC Awarded $300,000 Federal Grant for Violence Prevention

The grant is part of a continued effort at SARC to improve its response and prevention efforts toward domestic violence and sexual assault.

Alison Pepper recently was hired as UM’s director of Equity, Empowerment and Prevention.
MISSOULA – SARC, the Student Advocacy Resource Center at the University of Montana, recently earned a $300,000 federal grant to offer critical support for domestic violence and sexual assault prevention at UM and in the Missoula community.

The grant, from the national Office on Violence Against Women, will fund the UM PEACE Project (Prevention Education Anti-Violence Collaborative Effort). About $100,000 will be spent each year over the next three years. A bulk of the grant will fund a PEACE Project director, who will be hired by next year and add more capacity to SARC.

In addition, the grant will support a social media marketing campaign, outreach and training, and collaboration with community partners and other campuses across the nation. The project director will coordinate the work with both campus and Missoula community partners, said SARC Director Jen Euell.

“We are lucky because in Missoula there already is a lot of collaboration in the community and on campus,” Euell said. “We were able to benefit from those relationships and that’s a part of what was successful in securing the grant.”

With the new funding, SARC will be able to send a group of its staff and community partners to a national training to meet with staff from other universities also awarded the federal grant.

“Our campus and community will be trained in the current best practices in violence response and prevention, and they will be able to take that training and bring it back here and apply it on campus and in the community,” Euell said.

Another goal of the grant-funded PEACE Project is to create more anti-violence training for students, staff and faculty – particularly for marginalized groups such as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and LGBTQA+.
“It will be a much more strategic approach to violence prevention,” Euell said.

The grant is part of a continued effort at SARC to improve its response and prevention efforts toward domestic violence and sexual assault. Housed in UM’s Curry Health Center, SARC often is the confidential first call for students and others in the community who have experienced such violence.

To expand UM’s capacity, the University recently hired Alison Pepper, a former Missoula College professor and coordinator of prevention education at SARC, to fill a new role as director of Equity, Empowerment and Prevention.

Pepper, who will help lead the PEACE Project, is tasked with implementing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) training and education to students, faculty and staff. Pepper will not only examine gender and sex-based harm, but also race and other identity-based harm.

Between Pepper’s new position and the incoming PEACE Project director, UM will have more resources to put toward violence prevention and DEI training, Euell said.

“My hope is both with (Pepper’s) additional capacity in this new position and this grant and the position that will come with it, we will be able to have a robust, multipronged violence prevention approach,” Euell said.

Contact: Dave Kuntz, UM director of strategic communications, 406-243-5659, dave.kuntz@umontana.edu

Launch UM virtual tour.
UM's SARC Awarded $300,000 Federal Grant for Violence Prevention
UM's Family Medicine Residency of Western Montana now has residents in Hungry Horse. Picture are (left to right) Dr. Taylor Simmons, Dr. Bryce Roberts and Dr. Emilie McIntyre.

MISSOULA – A University of Montana-based program has expanded its residency physician medical services to include Greater Valley Health Center’s location in Hungry Horse.
UM’s Family Medicine Residency of Western Montana is able to expand its continuity clinic experiences to more rural and underserved populations thanks to a federally funded grant through the Health Resources Services Administration.

The UM residency program is one of 20 organizations nationally to receive this grant, with the goal of increasing rural training and exposure for resident physicians specializing in family medicine and primary care.

Three resident physicians will share patient duties at the Hungry Horse clinic this academic year: Dr. Taylor Simmons, a third-year resident, and second-year residents Dr. Bryce Roberts and Dr. Emilie McIntyre.

“To me, working in Hungry Horse feels like taking care of a family member,” Roberts said. “These patients are honest, hardworking folks who are usually sacrificing more than just their time to come and see me. It’s a privilege for me to know them and care for them. I also find it very satisfying to coordinate limited resources so that they can receive their care close to home. Hungry Horse is a wonderful community, and I am blessed to be able to work there.”

Resident physician training in rural areas is central to the FMRWM mission to train clinically competent physicians to practice in rural and underserved areas of Montana.

According to a 2016 analysis by the University of Washington, residency can be highly associated with the location where a physician eventually chooses to practice. The more training in rural and underserved areas, the more likely the resident will continue to practice in those areas. In Montana, 52 of 56 counties in Montana currently are designated primary care shortage areas.

“The Hungry Horse clinic is a small clinic that fills a big need,” Simmons said. “As a provider who is looking to practice in an underserved, low-resource area, I appreciate the opportunity in residency to train in a similar setting. Dr. Tremper, our primary supervising physician in Hungry Horse, is well known and well loved, and I always look forward to learning from him and his patient population. The creativity and flexibility required will keep us residents on our toes!”

Interested residents submitted an application for consideration for the Hungry Horse position. Three residents were chosen and will continue providing services through the 2022-23 academic year. The residency program will take applications each year to replace graduating
Hungry Horse Clinic Joins UM Resident Physician Program

residents.

FMRWM also sends Missoula-track residents to Partnership Health Center’s Seeley Lake clinic, as part of the rural continuity clinic program.

FMRWM is a three-year family medicine residency program based in Missoula with a track in Kalispell. Each year the program recruits 10 first-year residents and graduates 10 third-year residents. At any given time, there are 24 residents located in Missoula and six located in Kalispell.

Residents in Missoula complete their continuity clinic at Partnership Health Center, and Kalispell residents complete their continuity clinic at Greater Valley Health Center. FMRWM is part of the University of Washington Family Medicine Residency Network and is sponsored by Providence St. Patrick Hospital and Community Medical Center in Missoula and Logan Health in Kalispell.

The location of the Greater Valley Health Center clinic in Hungry Horse.

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Hungry Horse Clinic Joins UM Resident Physician Program

**Contact:** Dr. Samantha Greenberg, Kalispell site director, 406-607-4945, samantha.greenberg@umontana.edu.

Launch UM virtual tour.
UM student Nick Mills, shown here in front of the U.S. Capitol, was selected for a Washington, D.C., internship.

By Phil Stempin, UM News Service

MISSOULA – Missoula native Nick Mills has a passion for the outdoors and wildlife that runs as deep as the Rattlesnake Wilderness. He knew he wanted the right college to pursue his interests, and he didn’t have to look too far.

“I chose to stay in Missoula because of the University of Montana’s world-class wildlife biology program. I realized I wanted to protect the areas I loved,” said Mills. “Then I started taking
policy classes with Martin Nie, and the 4+1 program piqued my interest. It felt like a great way to combine policy and science.”

This set him on a path to being selected to intern with the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

Mills leveraged UM’s “4+1” program to earn this opportunity. Recognizing an increasing demand for careers in wildlife biology and public and nonprofit administration, UM’s Master of Public Administration and Wildlife Biology programs created a joint degree. The program is the first of its kind in the country.

The “4+1” program allows UM students to earn both a four-year Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife Biology and a two-year master’s degree in public administration at an accelerated pace of just five years, instead of the usual six.

The program requires an internship to give students a chance to hone their skills. For Mills, that means working with the White House.

“I gained the ability to listen to diverse sets of policyholders and then to come up with solutions for bigger picture decisions,” Mills said about the MPA program. “Connecting the dots [when dealing with complex issues] is crucial. The MPA helped me learn to analyze and look at the way things work before making decisions.”

The White House CEQ, led by Chair Brenda Mallory, advises the president on policies addressing the environmental justice and climate change challenges the nation faces while advancing opportunities for job growth and economic development.

“I feel very fortunate for not only this incredible internship, but for the skills I’ve learned in the 4+1 program,” Mills said. “This program opened up a lot for me. It is a launchpad for the career I want to pursue.”

For more information on UM’s 4+1 program, visit https://www.umt.edu/law/mpa/academics/four-plus-one.php.

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**Contact:** Phil Stempin; director of events, marketing and communications; UM Alexander Blewett III School of Law, 406-243-6509, phil.stempin@umontana.edu
Military veteran Renee Kelly has never outgrown her love for trucks. She earned her commercial driver’s license at UM’s Missoula College heavy equipment operation and CDL program.

MISSOULA – Like a lot of kids growing up, Renee Kelly liked to play with toy trucks in the backyard dirt pile.
Unlike a lot of kids, her love for big rigs never went away.

Today, Kelly owns a small fleet of heavy machinery and operates her recently launched landscaping business called Rock on Groundworks.

She got her start in the University of Montana's Missoula College heavy equipment operation and commercial driver's license program, learning how to shift through 18 speeds and back up a cargo trailer with precision. The basic skills she learned there have been invaluable ever since, said Kelly, who graduated in May 2022.

"Driving a mixer truck with 10 yards of concrete is definitely a learning curve," Kelly said. "Same with driving a semi with concrete blocks or picking up heavy equipment. You can't just change lanes; you have to think ahead. I like the challenge."

Kelly, a 13-year U.S. Army veteran who served two tours in the Middle East, represents the broad diversity of students now enrolling in the CDL program at Missoula College, said Larry Reinholz, director of the college's heavy equipment operation program.

"We definitely have more male students, but we are seeing more and more female students," Reinholz said. "For some students it's a second career, for some it's a third, but also for some it's a first. We see a diversity in ages too – from 18- to 70-year-old students enrolled in the program."

Much has been written the past few years about the nation's ongoing shortage of commercial truck drivers, which was made worse by the pandemic. In 2021 alone, trucking companies faced a deficit of 80,000 drivers according to the trade organization American Trucking Associations. Estimates are the industry shortage could top 160,000 drivers by 2030.

While there are many reasons for the shortage, the need is very much real, said Reinholz, who's worked in heavy equipment his whole life.

"I was driving an 18-wheeler when I was 8 years old, but that's eastern Montana," he said.

*Like most graduates of Missoula College’s CDL*
In the past 15 months, 55 students have completed the course, which requires completing federal paperwork and a physical and drug test before actual training starts. Most complete the course in 25 to 30 hours, learning to drive one of two semis – an 18-speed and a 10-speed.

Students just don’t learn to shift gears, they also learn what makes commercial rigs tick, said Andrew Tode, the program’s head instructor.

“We teach them the ins-and-outs of a trailer, how to add fluids and put on tire chains,” Tode said. “When you are on the road, you often have to be your own mechanic.”

The employment rate for students finishing the program is nearly 100%, Reinholz said.

Local employer, Derek Miller, a driver and maintenance manager for GW Petroleum, has hired three drivers from Missoula College and works closely with college staff to identify top drivers who he can take the next level of training for endorsements to haul hazmat cargo and fuel.

“It’s very tough to get drivers these days,” he said. “Without state-based schools like that at Missoula College, the country would come to a stop. No products, no fuel, no commerce.”

CDL graduate Danica Gorton enrolled at Missoula College following advice from her father, who operates a soil business in the Flathead Valley.

“I asked how I could help with the business, and he said he needed drivers with CDLs,” said Gorton, who earned a bachelors in psychology from UM.
Today, the mother of two drives for Pro Sweep Plus and hauls asphalt in her Kenworth dump truck she’s named Kenny.

“I grew up driving a stick shift, but this is a different beast,” said Gorton, who earned her CDL in April. “I love it, I absolutely love being in the truck.”

Having a truck driving mom though has worn off on her kids, she added.

“We’ll pass a big truck and I’ll point it out and tell them it’s just like the one I drive, and they are like, ‘Yeah, Mom, we know,’” she said with a chuckle.

Kelly went to work for Diversified Materials & Construction right after graduation and had valuable opportunities to learn “practical stuff” like handling a truck while driving up steep hills.

“I am grateful that they gave me a chance to prove myself,” she said.

Like the true gearhead that she is, Kelly hopes to one day replace her smaller dump truck with something bigger and beefier.

“I like working outside and driving heavy equipment,” she said. “There is a real sense of power when you are sitting up in that cab.”

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UM Study Finds Plant Growth Offsets Carbon Release of Thawing Permafrost

A picture of the boreal-tundra tree line near Denali, Alaska. (Photo by John Kimball)
MISSOULA – Permafrost is a layer of soil in polar and forested boreal regions that remains frozen all year. A new study from the University of Montana challenges the notion that high-latitude permafrost regions are becoming a net source of carbon dioxide that greatly contributes to climate warming.

The study was led by researchers in UM’s Numerical Terradynamic Simulation Group, a leader in satellite remote sensing and Earth-system science. Their findings were published in Nature Communications.

The team used satellites, ground stations and other observable data to reach its conclusions. The study revealed that a strong warming trend in northern regions has increased plant growth, which has offset rising CO₂ emissions from thawing permafrost.

“Northern permafrost regions contain vast amounts of organic carbon in frozen soils,” said Ashley Ballantyne, the co-lead author and a UM professor of global climate and ecology. “This new study finds that enhanced photosynthetic CO₂ uptake from plants is increasing faster than
UM Study Finds Plant Growth Offsets Carbon Release of Thawing Permafrost

the warming-induced rise in emissions from the permafrost tundra region. In fact, the permafrost tundra region has become a strong CO₂ sink.”

A CO₂ sink takes in more carbon than it emits. John Kimball, the NTSG director and a UM professor of systems ecology, said their historical data revealed the permafrost tundra region shifted from a near-net-neutral condition in the 1980s to an ecosystem carbon sink around the turn of the century in 2000.

“This was caused by enhanced photosynthetic uptake due to warming, woody vegetation encroachment and other factors,” Kimball said. “These findings underscore the importance of looking at both carbon uptake and release to truly understand the net carbon exchange in permafrost ecosystems.”

At this time, he said, the primary mechanism for the regional carbon sink is enhanced CO₂ uptake in the early growing season, which still is outpacing late-season carbon emissions.

Interestingly, the rate of net carbon uptake was weaker where the tree cover was greater in regions studied north of 50 degrees latitude. Consequently, though boreal forests remain strong carbon sinks, a trend toward rising CO₂ emissions from microbial respiration from decomposing soil organic matter in the late growing season is offsetting more plant uptake of carbon early in growing seasons – potentially shrinking the net carbon sink in boreal forests.

“This is concerning because the results undermine the notion that northern high-latitude forests could become a long-term carbon sink,” Kimball said. “Enhanced CO₂ release from thawing permafrost – together with other intensified disturbances – may ultimately switch boreal forest into a net carbon emitter as warming continues.”

Kimball said the study shows the need for global Earth-system models that better predict regional responses and feedbacks resulting from climate change.

“Next-generation satellite missions are planned that will provide new capabilities for landscape-level monitoring of permafrost conditions across the northern high latitudes,” he said. “These observations will have better spatial covering, resolution and sensitivity than current satellite records or ground station networks.

“We can’t wait.”
The UM-based researchers collaborated on the study with a group of 14 other scientists around the globe.

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UM Study Finds Plant Growth Offsets Carbon Release of Thawing Permafrost