MONTANA KAIMIN
‘THERE’S ALWAYS SOMETHING MISSING’

LIFE AFTER THE DEATH OF A UM STUDENT

NEWS Bodnar plans to cut 50 faculty

SPORTS Tryout to be Monte!

OPINION It’s okay to criticize UM
The Weekly Crossword
by Margie E. Burke

April 25–May 2, 2018
The Montana Kaimin is a weekly independent student newspaper at the University of Montana.

ON THE COVER
Hundreds of people place candles on the Sigma Nu symbol outside the fraternity in remembrance of Brenden Sperr in March 2015. PHOTO LACEY YOUNG

FOR RENT
Cheap Charley’s Mini Storage, Griz Discount: Option 1) Full month free with 3 months up front. Option 2) 5% Griz Discount off regular price with Free signup fee! U-Haul rental also available. (406) 721-7277

HELP WANTED
DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL—Supporting Persons with Disabilities in Enhancing their Quality of Life. Evenings, Weekends & Overnight hours available. $10.00/hr. Excellent Benefits! Must Have: Valid Mt driver license, No history of neglect, abuse or exploitation. Applications available at OPPORTUNITY RESOURCES, INC., 2821 S. Russell, Missoula, MT. 59801 or online at www.orimt.org. Extensive background checks will be completed. NO RESUMES. EEO/AA-M/F/disability/protected veteran status.

City of Missoula Development Services Dept: Program Specialist I. $18,456.3/hr. www.ci.missoula.mt.us/jobs. EEO/ADA/Vet Pref Employer

SERVICES
I Buy Imports < Subaru < Toyota-Japanese/German Cars & Trucks. Nice, ugly, running or not 327-0300

SUDOKU
How to solve:
Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9 and
Answers to Last Week’s Sudoku:

Contact us to sponsor a puzzle!
(406) 243-4310 or kaiminads@montanakaimin.com

The Montana Kaimin is a weekly independent student newspaper at the University of Montana.

For comments, corrections or letters to the editor, contact editor@montanakaimin.com or call (406) 243-4310.
For advertising opportunities, contact ads@montanakaimin.com or call (406) 243-6541.
Cuts to languages hurt diversity, students and University

Last week, the Kaimin published an article titled “Student group studying diversity hopes to spur changes at UM.” The article points out that, according to the diversity page on UM’s website, “UM recognizes the importance of a commitment to diversity,” defining it “as the ability to ‘respect, welcome, encourage, and celebrate the differences among us.’” President Seth Bodnar is also quoted, telling the Kaimin that: “Diversity is not just something that you speak to [...] You have to be intentional and systematic about it.” The Department of Modern and Classical Languages embodies the very idea of diversity through its international faculty and the wide variety of courses in its curriculum. We are distinctive, even on a national scale, because of the number of languages we teach. However, we teach more than language. Our curriculum is full of courses on literature, film and culture and civilization from around the globe. Such courses expand the horizons of UM students, from Montana and elsewhere, showing them the world beyond Montana (and the U.S.). In addition, almost every faculty member has directed study abroad programs that have been life-changing for our students.

The proposals in the “University of Montana Strategy for Distinction” would severely inhibit MCLL’s ability to offer the distinctive courses that have been a part of UM’s liberal arts education since the University’s founding. Cutting almost half of our faculty FTE certainly would make a distinct statement about the new path of monolingualism on which our current administration is leading UM, while sending interested students to MSU rather than UM. The justification for the suggested curtailment is that MCLL has seen a decline in degrees awarded, but the selective use of data entirely ignores quality of instruction and the relevance of foreign languages and cultures in a clearly global world. Cutting MCLL is a political decision from an administration that has decided that foreign languages and cultures do not matter to our students or to the economy in 21st century Montana.

MCLL is a nationally-known department. Faculty members have been on the executive boards of all of our professional bodies, national and international, regularly attending and presenting at the conferences of these organizations. We have held national conferences in Missoula, putting UM “on the map” and at the forefront of (inter)national recognition. We are part of what makes UM distinct and are integral to its liberal arts mission.

On a personal note: I was a fortunate recipient of a liberal arts education at UM, double majoring in English and German — both programs now slated for severe curtailment. The opportunities I received as a native Montanan at UM allowed me to “see the world.” The education I received enriched my life and helped me become a global citizen. I would hope that we have enough vision to continue to offer enriching experiences for future generations. True education is about more than learning technical skills.

LIZ AMETSBICHLER
Modern and Classical Languages and Literature
Professor and Department Chair

RENE SANCHEZ
rene.sanchez@umontana.edu/@ReneSanchez440
OPINION

KAIMIN COLUMN

Queeries: A big gay thank you

As I prepare to graduate from the University of Montana, I can’t help getting a little sappy and reflective. This University and my experience here both mean a lot to me, especially in terms of my identity.

UM is where I first considered the fact that I may be trans. I came out to my friends and family over the phone from my dorm room freshman year. As I grew and developed as a person, I also became more confident in my gender and sexuality. I carved out a space for myself here so I could better advocate for my community. I began my transition here. I made some incredible friendships here that have been vital to my wellbeing as a transgender student. I have a lot to thank the UM community for.

Almost everywhere I’ve gone on campus, I have been able to find supportive individuals who have helped me and advocated for me. I am lucky to work at two campus organizations where I feel safe being out and proud. My experiences with other campus services, like Curry Health Center, have also been largely positive. Every semester since my freshman year, I’ve had at least one professor who I’ve felt comfortable being out to. Since I changed my name, every person on this campus who knew me by my old name has made the switch, despite that switch not yet being legal. These events may seem small, and they do constitute a tiny percentage of my college experience, but they have been among the most impactful events for me. They’re why I feel comfortable writing this column.

Despite all this incredible support, I can’t help noticing a glaring hole in my experience. It’s true that I have been lucky enough to find kind and helpful individuals in my time here, but what I haven’t found is consistent institutional support for LGBTQ people on this campus. Most of the helpful information I’ve gotten in my four years here has come from other transgender people. I wouldn’t even have known where to start looking without information being passed via word of mouth throughout the trans community.

While that may not seem like a problem, it actually makes trans and gay people’s lives very difficult. If you don’t know where to find information about changing your name on Cyberbear, for example, you might never get around to it. If you don’t know that there are trans-friendly doctors at Curry Health Center, you might avoid getting medical care out of fear of being misgendered or being told that your medical issues are a result of you being trans. If you don’t know that these services are even an option, you might never find out where or how to look for them.

As it stands, the easiest way to get this information is to ask other transgender people who have been through these processes before. The problem with that is that not all trans people know each other. We don’t have a monthly meeting where we all exchange business cards and talk about who the most sensitive and discreet staff members in the Residence Life Office are. Sure, there are student groups and task forces in place to help LGBTQ students feel more connected, but these groups don’t reach every single gay or trans student. Furthermore, an LGBTQ-identified person should not be tasked with making other trans or gay friends just so they can feel safe and supported on this campus. They should feel safe in the first place.

I am very thankful for my experiences at UM. I believe this University can be a more inclusive and accepting place, and we’re nowhere near done yet.

CAL REYNOLDS
calreynolds.queeries@gmail.com
@CalReynoldsMT

KAIMIN COLUMN

Active criticism is the ultimate act of love

This is my last column here at the Kaimin, and I genuinely hope I have made you readers happy, or at least, not hate me. As a farewell salute to both this paper and this esteemed university, I’m Famous Last Words-ing à la Humphrey Bogart.

I am not a journalism major. I am an economics major who happens to enjoy writing. I got this job by the grace of God and the luck of the Irish. In the year I’ve spent here, I’ve learned how to deal with angry East Missoulians, ridiculous AP style regulations and the constant ebb and flow of published content and reader reaction to what the team at the Kaimin produces.

It hasn’t always been easy, especially coming from a field in which I primarily write for an insular audience of 12 money nerds. What I’ve realized primarily from my work here is that writing for a public audience is often hell, and there is a substantial group of Missoulians, both students and not, who react pretty aggressively toward criticism of the University.

The assertion that is constantly leveled at students — both working at the Kaimin and not — who criticize this school or the administration is that it’s unhelpful, will deepen the already terrible budget crisis and is politically biased. To all of these critics I say, “Maybe.” It’s most likely true that having continued heated debate and opinions about which direction this school is going in won’t bring back fired professors or generate income for the school.

But I would much rather go to a school in which the students are actively engaged with their university than the parallel universe alternative, where we sit placidly and sigh while saying, “It must be for the best,” and the administration cuts funding for departments they deem less valuable. In my opinion, a silent spring type campus where we act like everything is great and normal would be far more indicative of problems within our education. The ultimate value in creating dialogue about how we react to internal conflict is in the change we can create, both for ourselves and for future students.

Sometimes unfair criticism deserves pushback, and I can appreciate that too. Sometimes people speaking or writing in a public sphere screw up, and I think mistakes should be acknowledged and fixed. But while the school enters a new era of Bodnar-ism (I’m copyrighting that, everybody back off. It’s mine.) the idea of a fresh slate and room for beginner’s errors is in some ways valuable, but also removes accountability from the new administration.

Ultimately, I loved this school, and this town, and my professors, and my friends and most people I interacted with. That’s why I want it to be better.

I encourage all students to continue to engage with the administration, your departments and your faculty. The ultimate act of love you can do for your fellow students, favorite professors and University is to speak up when something is happening that you feel is wrong.

CAYLEY BOYD
cayley.boyd@umontana.edu
@cayleyboyd
University of Montana department heads were stunned by University President Seth Bodnar’s announcement that each department would be making a case for continuation during next month’s broadcast of “So You Think You Can Teach.”

During last Friday’s season premiere of “SYTYCT” in the Music Recital Hall, Bodnar proposed cutting 50 University faculty positions over the show’s next three seasons.

The show’s producers went to extreme lengths to keep the script under wraps leading up to the premiere, including denying records requests and shutting off a projector during a public meeting.

The secrecy paid off, Bodnar said.

The administration’s choice of an anything-goes variety show to decide the future of an entire university came as a surprise to many.

“I’m numb. I need to call my wife. I can’t take living with her mother again, oh Christ. Get out of my way, move,” a philosophy professor said.

Joining Bodnar as judges in deciding who receives unemployment will be incoming Provost Jon Harbor and interim-provost and law school dean Paul Kirgis.

Harbor recently beat out two other finalists for UM’s provost position because of his ability to look into the correct camera and express his desire to turn “UM into the university of choice for Montana’s television audience.”

The three judges will watch performances from the steps of Main Hall while noshing from a table laden with Iron Griz appetizers. They will communicate their decision in the 12th paragraph of a campus-wide email sent out after every episode.

UM’s administration spent months perfecting the show’s format. Pilots were shot and left on Main Hall’s floor.

Left on the scrap heap was a pilot where each department would select a champion to enter Griz Stadium to a roaring crowd. Armed with letter openers, the departments would make their own cuts.

“Griziators” was canceled due to an inability to reserve the stadium during UM’s football season. The Adams Center was nixed for similar concerns with not wanting to disrupt a September Keith Urban concert.

“Jon [Harbor] has been really psyched about this ‘Graffiti U World Tour,’” and we definitely weren’t doing it in Schreiber,” Bodnar said.

There had been rumors a “Billy Madison”-style academic decathlon would take place, but Bodnar said this “would stifle creativity on campus” and be unfair to the journalism department.

“It took us a few fuck ups,” Kirgis said, “but we finally decided this is what we will do.”

The announcement of the University-wide televised live contest sent department heads scrambling to their offices to start brainstorming showstoppers and call their lawyers.

The English department is threatened with losing six positions. “We plan on banding our creative talents to somehow show the judges English is pivotal to UM’s success. Except for the Irish Studies,” an English professor said.

Confidence levels are high in the music department, which is facing three cuts. The department will have the Griz Marching Band tread through the Oval playing Leon Bridges’ 2015 album “Coming Home,” a known favorite of Bodnar’s, on repeat.

“We are a little worried about students becoming dehydrated, fainting and being trampled to death during the smooth crescendo of Bridge’s title track,” a music professor said, “but that’s what the EMTs are for.”

The once-a-month, Saturday afternoon variety show is expected to end its inevitably disappointing and degrading run on ABC-FOX before the fall 2021 semester.

UM students have had mixed reactions.

“I think I’m going to transfer this summer,” a freshman studying history said.

“I think I’m going to transfer this fall,” a junior in the math program said.

The once-a-month, Saturday afternoon variety show is expected to end its inevitably disappointing and degrading run on ABC-FOX before the fall 2021 semester.

UM administrators, advocates of transparency and empathy toward faculty, stress they would rather not see “So You Think You Can Teach” complete its full run.

“We’re hoping a lot of these cuts work themselves out through people retiring, finding new jobs or dying,” Bodnar said.

An alliance has been formed between modern and classical languages and literature, facing seven cuts, and theater and dance, facing two cuts.

“We’re really worried about losing Greek and Latin,” a foreign language professor said. “So with theater, we’re going to perform live action adaptations of the “Iliad” and the “Aeneid.””

Time constraints will delay the first live performance. The current plan is to wheel a TV onto the Oval and show the 1954 version of “Ulysses” starring Kirk Douglas. “We’re lucky, it was just released on Blu-ray, so it’s going to look pretty good out there,” the professor said.

UM students have had mixed reactions.

“I think I’m going to transfer this summer,” a freshman studying history said.

“I think I’m going to transfer this fall,” a junior in the math program said.

The once-a-month, Saturday afternoon variety show is expected to end its inevitably disappointing and degrading run on ABC-FOX before the fall 2021 semester.

UM administrators, advocates of transparency and empathy toward faculty, stress they would rather not see “So You Think You Can Teach” complete its full run.

“We’re hoping a lot of these cuts work themselves out through people retiring, finding new jobs or dying,” Bodnar said.
University of Montana President Seth Bodnar released a draft of his recommendations for faculty and program cuts last Tuesday, including eliminating about 50 full time faculty positions over a three-year period.

The release was followed by a special Faculty Senate meeting to present the recommendations for review.

The hardest-hit program would be Modern and Classical Languages and Literature, which is poised to lose 75 full time positions, closely followed by English, which would be cut by six full time positions, according to the draft recommendations.

Bodnar said that reductions in faculty will take place over the next three years. He said he hopes much of that will be through retirement and natural attrition.

“These numbers are approximate,” Bodnar said. “But we believe the bulk of these reductions will be achieved through departures and other attrition [over the next three years]. Where that’s not possible, there will be curtailment in specific areas.”

Bodnar also emphasized that he hoped the changes would work to best serve students and the state now and in the future, and that current students will be able to graduate in whatever major they are working toward.

At the senate meeting, faculty raised concerns about the process for letting professors go if the three-year period given for the cuts lapses and departments haven’t met their proposed reductions. One faculty member said he was concerned that professors would be fired without the due process laid out in the faculty union contract. Bodnar assured the senate that the proper channels would be used to eliminate jobs, if the time comes.

The campus has about a week and a half to submit feedback to him on the changes before the recommendations are finalized and eventually presented to the Board of Regents.

The draft also offered suggestions for combining and restructuring programs:

- **Humanities and Sciences:**
  The master’s programs in anthropology, sociology and linguistics will be combined into one master’s in Social Science.
  The communication studies department will be integrated with the School of Journalism and the composition and rhetoric faculty from the English department.
  Individual majors in French, German, Spanish, Russian and classics will be eliminated and consolidated into two majors, Asian Studies and European Studies, each with an emphasis in a specific language. The cut of 75 faculty accounts for about 35 percent of MCLL faculty, according to numbers provided by acting provost Paul Kirgis.
  The draft says graduate offerings in English will be consolidat-
LA building renovations provide air conditioning and fire sprinklers

CAMERON KIA WEIX
cameron.kiaweix@umontana.edu

Ever wonder why the Liberal Arts building has such small windows? The '70s, that’s why.

The Liberal Arts building, now Eck Hall, has undergone renovations recently, with plans for more construction work over the next two summers. UM architect Jameel Chaudhry said the building has issues with heating and cooling, and the classrooms are usually boiling hot.

Sociology and political science student Victoria Koch said, “Most classes that I’ve had in here, the heating and cooling is based off of whether you have the window open.”

Those windows were not part of the E-shaped building’s original design. UM architect Jameel Chaudhry said the original windows were much larger but not very energy efficient.

“In the seventies, with the energy crisis, they filled those windows in with foam and plaster. That’s how you end up with those single wood casement four-by-four windows,” Chaudhry said.

Chaudhry said the renovations are bringing back the larger windows, this time with insulated glass, and installing air conditioning in the classrooms. Dennis and Gretchen Eck have funded the renovations with ongoing donations totaling more than $8 million, according to the Missoulian.

“It’s very unusual, nationwide, to get a donor that wants to contribute money to renovate an existing building,” said Director of Facility Services, Kevin Krebsbach.

Recent renovations also installed fire sprinklers in the main corridor. The LA building did not have any fire sprinklers before then.

Missoula Fire Marshal Dax Fraser said buildings are grandfathered in under the fire code from when they were built. According to UM’s website, the LA Building was constructed in 1953.

Chaudhry said all the classrooms facing the Oval would be updated by fall 2019. Classrooms facing away from the Oval will not be renovated. The University does not have plans, or funds, to renovate the building’s three wings of offices, which do not have fire sprinklers.

“We don’t like partially-sprinklered buildings,” Krebsbach said. “So I’m sure if we ever get to the point that we’re renovating those wings, we definitely would [install fire sprinklers].”

Of the building’s 30 classrooms, Chaudhry said three have been converted into the new lounges and entryway, 18 will be renovated and 9 will remain the same.

Economics student Jacob Mahoney said, “Investing in the LA building definitely shows the school recognizes that the liberal arts are important.”

ASUM ELECTIONS

ASUM election results announced after controversial primary

MADELINE BROOM
madeline.broom@umontana.edu/@madelinebroom

Two candidate teams are moving on to the general election for president and vice president of the Associated Students of the University of Montana on April 25 and 26.

Alex Butler and Mariah Welch, who placed first in the primary with 1,035 votes, will face off against Michael Toppen and Colin Milton, who received 433 votes.

Hugues de Pingon and Jet Bibler will not be moving on to the general election after receiving 162 votes.

The total voter turnout for the ASUM primary election was 11.4 percent of students. Last year’s general election turnout was 20.7 percent of students.

ASUM bylaws call for a primary if there are more than two teams running. A two-thirds majority vote by the senate is required to omit a primary election. ASUM senate voted on April 4 to hold the primary, with nine in favor of holding a primary and 11 against. The four presidential and vice presidential candidates on ASUM abstained.

De Pingon and Bibler said they were against holding a primary, according to comments on their Facebook page. They said in that the primary was held “because enough inside senators and executives voted against taking it down out of fears of [our] team.”

No mention of specific executive teams were made on the senate floor when debating the primary.

On the day of the primary Toppen and Milton could be seen on the Oval along with Butler and Welch as they campaigned and made the final push. Toppen and Milton said they hope to bring fiscal stability, sustainability and passionate leadership to ASUM, according to their campaign Facebook page.

Toppen congratulated Butler and Welch on making it through to the general election and said he looks forward to seeing them on the Oval as they “sell their visions” to voters.

Butler and Welch’s campaign has focused around student engagement. Their campaign slogan is, “student driven.”

“We are excited to have another week to reach out, share why we are running, and hear more from all of you,” Welch said.

If elected, de Pingon and Bibler had pledged to decongest parking lots, bring back the Galloping Griz food truck and establish an “honorable and vigorous student government.”

De Pingon and Bibler declined to comment on the primary election results.
In February 2015, Brenden Sperr bought the truck of his dreams. A friend who knew a lot about trucks helped him pick out a black, heavy-duty Dodge Ram with a deer grill on the front. He named it Sarabeth, after the Rascal Flatts song he loved. He would park her on Gerald Avenue, in front of the fraternity house he was pledging, because he suspected his dorm roommate was taking his keys and driving his truck without asking him.

Six weeks later, Tammy Sperr and her husband Mark drove 18 hours from Eden Prairie, Minnesota, to Missoula to pick up Sarabeth. Their 19-year-old son had killed himself, and they had to pack up his things. They spent one day in Missoula. They cleaned up Brenden’s room and talked to his friends and teachers, searching for a single shred of evidence that would help explain why their son was dead.

Eden Prairie is a picturesque city 20 minutes outside of Minneapolis. It’s filled with culs-de-sac and parks, and in 2010 it was named the No. 1 place to live by Money Magazine. It was the perfect place for the Sperrs to raise three boys, with family less than three hours away, a great school district and plenty of opportunities for athletics.

Brenden was their middle son. He was more of a daredevil than his brothers. He enjoyed rugby, downhill skiing and anything else that allowed him to be outdoors. During high school, Brenden asked to change schools; he would later graduate with 875 people, and his mother suspected that he got a little lost in such a big crowd.

“He gave the best bear hugs of anyone,” Tammy Sperr said. “He hugged you because he wanted to hug you, and he wouldn’t let go until you smiled.”

Brenden got along well with his classmates. Jay Halverson, who’d known Brenden since he was 2 years old, said Brenden was the person everyone confided in.

“I would go to Brenden for absolutely everything that was going on in my life,” Halverson said. “He knew me more than I knew myself.”

Her son’s move to college was difficult for Tammy. Bren-
Brenden had never been so far away from home, and the girlfriend he’d had a rocky relationship with was following him to UM. But her son seemed to be doing well during his first semester. He was enjoying his classes, looking into intramural sports and was planning on pledging a fraternity.

Chase Hulett, a member of the fraternity Brenden pledged, was one of the first people to befriend Brenden. Hulett got along with most people well, but Brenden understood his sense of humor and was fun to be around.

They both liked to be outdoors, and would often drive around Missoula when it was nice out, arguing about whether or not it was illegal to pull forward in a turn lane before the light turned yellow.

“If he was here today, we would still argue about that,” Hulett said.

Hulett said Brenden wanted to create bonds with people, and their friendship was built on trust. Brenden would sometimes hide how upset he was about his girlfriend, and Hulett would give him advice on how to get through it.

“I told him, ‘Life is going to be how you make it,’” Hulett said.

Over winter break, Brenden’s ex-girlfriend left UM to go to a community college closer to home, and Brenden thrived. He went on a trip to Canada with his fraternity brothers, bought his truck and made plans to go home with Hulett for spring break. Tammy noticed her son was behaving more like himself, and everything seemed so much better.

“I guess hindsight is 20/20,” she said.

On March 14, 2015, there was a party at the fraternity house. Brenden was planning on going with his ex-girlfriend, who was visiting him for a week.

“He said he was bringing his ex to the party and that he was going to try and fix everything that had happened between them,” Hulett said.

Hulett met her briefly at the party, in his room on the second floor, where he would often host smaller gatherings with close friends while strangers danced and drank in the basement two floors below. Later, Hulett saw Brenden and his ex-girlfriend in a room at the end of the hallway. They were arguing. At the end of the hall, Brenden shut the door. It would be the last time Hulett would see him.

Around 11 p.m., Brenden and his girlfriend left the party and walked back to his dorm room. They were both drunk, and got into another argument.

“She said that it was nothing major, nothing out of the ordinary.” Tammy said.

They parted ways, and Brenden texted his friend Mariah and asked if she was around. He wanted to talk. Mariah had gone home that weekend, and was on a bus back to Missoula when she got Brenden’s text. She asked him what was going on and he told her that they could talk when she returned.

“Ok,” she typed. “Are you sure you’re alright?”

“T’m about to be fucking fantastic,” he said.

On March 15, Tammy Sperr woke up to a text from Brenden.

“Tried calling you,” it said. “I know you were going to a movie with a friend. I just wanted to call and let you know how much I love you and how much I miss you and I can’t wait to come home.”

Tammy smiled at the message, she guessed that her son had been drinking the night before and was feeling sentimental about the fact that he would be home in less than a week for spring break.

“Do you think that’s all it is?” she asked her husband.

“Yes,” he reassured her.

By early Sunday afternoon, Chase Hulett and another fraternity brother, Gus, had started driving around looking for Brenden. He was supposed to be initiated into the fraternity later that day, and no one had heard from him since the party the night before. The two went to Craig Hall and knocked on the door of Brenden’s room, yelling his name. A head poked out from a few doors down and told them the police had car-
ried a body bag out of that same room earlier that day.

Hulett was in disbelief.

“I started screaming and yelling and Gus had to hold me back so I wouldn’t freak out on the kid,” Hulett said.

They went to the Residence Life director to learn what had happened, then returned to their waiting brothers at the fraternity house.

“When I walked in the house, everyone was just staring at me.” Hulett said. “They all knew what had happened.”

--

Tammy Sperr wasn’t worried until Sunday night. They still hadn’t heard from Brenden, but Tammy knew that he had fraternity events that day. Around 9 p.m. she decided to go upstairs and get ready for bed. Usually her sons called between 8 and 10 p.m. when they were settled down for the day.

She was in the bathroom when her husband called for her. She told him no, she was waiting for Brenden to call.

“No Tammy, the cops are here, you need to come,” he said.

“What?” she asked.

“Brenden?” she asked

“No, something’s going on in the neighborhood,” he said.

When Tammy got to the stairs, she saw two police officers and another man in uniform staring up at her. She crept down the stairs slowly, and when she was two steps from the bottom, she stopped and looked at the policewoman.

The policewoman’s eyes were red, and she wouldn’t look at Tammy. She had only been back to work for a few months since she’d had her first baby, and all she could think about was what it would be like to be on the receiving end of the worst call she had ever been on.

Tammy repeated her son’s name to the officers. She told them she and her husband had been trying to get a hold of him all day, which wasn’t typical of him. The male officer confirmed that it was about Brenden. Mark Sperr asked if their son had been in an accident, and the officer just stared at them.

“Oh my God.” Tammy whispered.

“Is he in the hospital?” Mark asked. “Do we need to get to Montana?”

“No,” Tammy said. “No, we don’t have to go to Montana.”

The policeman asked her how she knew. She said she just did.

“You’re right,” the policeman said. “I regret to inform you that the Montana police department called us and said that your son was found dead in his dorm room.”

The next three hours were a blur. They cried. They screamed. They told their two other sons, home for spring break, what had happened. They spoke with the police chaplain, the third person who came to the door that night, and there. Tammy’s parents, who lived an hour away, got to Eden Prairie by 11 p.m.

“It was like walking in quicksand in the dark,” Tammy said.

On Monday they talked to the funeral director and called friends and family; Jay Halverson, Brenden’s lifelong friend, would leave his spring break ski trip to return to Eden Prairie two days later. On Wednesday, Brenden’s body came, shattering Tammy’s last remaining hope that a mistake had been made. The wake was Friday, the funeral Saturday, then the Sperrs drove to Montana the next Tuesday.

“No mother should go through a teenage boy’s dorm room,” Tammy said.

They found six bottles of Advil (Brenden had three concussions during his life, and Tammy thought his headaches might have been acting up again), some hidden bottles of alcohol and a Montana Grizzlies notebook tucked among Brenden’s schoolbooks. There were only six pages written in it, things that would seem like “normal teenage crap” to many, but showed the deeply rooted insecurities that Brenden didn’t share with anyone.

The Sperrs went to Brenden’s fraternity house and met Hulett and the rest of the brothers. The house held a vigil on March 17, and there were still candles melted to the sidewalk when Tammy Sperr arrived, so she took one home with her and lights it every year on the anniversary of Brenden’s death.

“The first year was hell,” Tammy said. “The second year was worse in some ways. The devastation is gone but the reality sets in.”

As the third anniversary of Brenden’s death neared, those closest to him began to see a shift. They were finally moving forward. Brenden was coming up in conversation again, without the air being sucked out of the room at the mention of his name.

“We laugh, we have good times … But there’s always something missing,” Tammy said.

Tammy, Hulett and Halverson all worked through Brenden’s death in their own ways.

Tammy Sperr and her husband started attending a support...
group, which she said saved her life. She learned more about suicide and depression, and is taking a grief and death certification class to help others with the stories they carry.

They started celebrating the Fourth of July again, Brenden’s favorite holiday, and got a dog, a German Shepard-Husky mix, the two breeds Brenden always wanted.

Hulett would call Brenden’s phone after he died and listen to his voicemail so he could hear his voice.

“After a few weeks I called and it said that the phone line had been disconnected,” Hulett said. “That really made me realize that I’d never hear his voice again.”

Hulett said he hates when people use the phrase “get over it,” but he does believe that there is power in focusing on the future and learning to work through life’s challenges.

“It’s not about the shit that happens,” he said. “It’s about how you react to it.”

Jay Halverson drove through Montana two months after Brenden died and hiked the Tower Street Trail that overlooks the Clark Fork River in Missoula, Brenden’s favorite place to read and write.

Halverson takes the day off every year, and said that it’s always beautiful outside on March 15.

He said he’s noticed a change within himself since Brenden died. He is no longer the kid who could never sit still, and has become more reserved.

“I’ve spent more time in my life focusing on my friends, consoling them, listening to them, being there for them for whatever they need,” he said.

While everyone remembers Brenden in different places and in different ways, one idea they share is that people need to be kinder and more aware of those around them.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among men ages 15 to 34, and Tammy Sperr believes that people, especially young people, need to be educated on suicide and depression.

“They have to know that kids are suffering,” she said. “They have to know that depression is real.”

Tammy knows there are many who are unable to get treatment for mental health problems, and those close to young people have to start being better about paying attention. After Brenden’s death, Tammy chose to use her pain to help others understand their own pain.

“It’s about actively doing something for someone,” she said.

Hulett, who has struggled with depression himself, said it can be easy to push people away when they have a problem, but that to truly help someone, you have to be dedicated to that person.

“Let them know that you are there for them, and comfort them, instead of pushing them away,” he said.

Halverson agreed that while it can be uncomfortable to support someone at times, it could have a massive effect on someone’s overall attitude.

He said if he notices someone who seems like they’re having a bad day he’ll reach out, even if he doesn’t know the person well, and ask them to get coffee with him.

“It’s so meaningful,” he said. “Just being able to see that someone cares.”

In fall 2014, Brenden wrote an article for an adventure writing class that was published on the Make it Missoula website. He wrote about the Tower Street Trail:

“My favorite place on the trail looks like a tree graveyard. There are dead, fallen-over trees everywhere. One tree is perfectly placed, almost as if somebody had picked up this huge trunk and laid it down right next to the river. I sit down on this barkless expanse as I have done so many times before, pull out my book and read for an hour or so. Eventually I put my book down and stare out across the river, admiring the view.”

Students experiencing depression or suicidal thoughts can make an appointment with Curry Health Center Counseling by calling 406-243-4711. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24 hours a day at 1-800-273-8255.
American singer-songwriter John Craigie will bring his brand of “humorous storytelling” and “serious folk” to the Top Hat on Thursday, May 3. Craigie’s performances include engaging and comedic stories sprinkled between folksy Americana music.

**MONTANA KAIMIN: WHEN AND WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO START USING STORYTELLING IN YOUR SETS? HAS IT ALWAYS BEEN PART OF IT?**

**JOHN CRAIGIE:** In the beginning, I did not talk between the songs. I had grown up in the ‘90s, and all the music I listened to and saw was very serious, and the artists never talked to the audience. But as I started my career, I found that audiences were really interested in the stories behind the songs they love and the stories of my travels. I always was a storyteller in my social group, even before I was a musician, and wanted to bring that into my live show. I’ve also noticed that if you give an introduction, people will listen to the lyrics more intently, which is what I want to get across. If you feel it’s important, they will too.

**MONTANA KAIMIN: WHAT DO YOU HOPE PEOPLE ATTENDING YOUR CONCERT GAIN FROM THE SHOW?**

**JOHN CRAIGIE:** I think the storytelling is a unique aspect. I’d also like to think the honesty and the vulnerability is unique because not every performer allows himself to have that. Being up there by myself allows the listener to connect more, and all the walls of rock ‘n’ roll pageantry are knocked down. I try to be relatable as possible. I always joke that people go to shows like Andrew Bird, Wilco, Flaming Lips, Feist and they’re like, “Man, I could never do that.” They come to a Craigie show, and they’re like, “I could definitely do that.” It’s a fun jab at myself, but I aim for that kind of connection every show.
SUMMER ACTIVITIES

The ABCs of Summer: A Missoula bucket list

MICAH DREW
micah.drew@umontana.edu /@micahddrew

Congratulations! The end of spring semester is nearly here, but what’s an adventurous, young student to do with all that free time? Worry no more, the Kaimin has you covered. Here’s your definitive A to Z guide to a sunny summer in western Montana.

A: Angling. A river runs through it, so you should at least attempt fly fishing.

B: Biking the Bitterroot (brewery) trail. Ride 50 miles from the heart of Missoula to Hamilton. The trail parallels the Bitterroot mountains, so the view is solid. The Kaimin does not promote the visitation of all 11 breweries between Hamilton and Missoula in a single ride. But give it a try.

C: Carousel. Because you are NEVER too old to ride the carousel in Caras Park.

D: Dine al fresco. Also known as a picnic or eating outside.

E: Elevation. Can you get higher than 9,000 feet? 10,000? 11,000?

F: Farmers market. Every Saturday from May through October, the parking lot near Caras Park fills with vendors hawking their wares. Stop by for a breakfast treat or to pick up some of the freshest veggies around. Side note: makes for a great, cheap and low-key date.

G: Glacier National Park. It took me three years of living in Missoula before I finally made the trip up to Glacier. Make sure you see Grinnell Glacier before it melts. Thanks, global warming.

H: Huckleberries. You can't spend summer in Missoula without trying real, fresh huckleberries. Buy a bag at the farmers market or pick them yourself. The “purple gold” grows at higher elevations, above 4,000 feet. Hike off-trail up the Rattlesnake or Pattee Canyon in late July or early August.

Ice cream: Presumably you’ve already made the trek to Big Dipper at least once (or twice, or three times…) but now that the weather is nice, you have an excuse to go back every day! To put your taste buds to the test, visit Sweet Peaks as well and pick your side in the argument of which one is better.

J: Jerry Johnson. You can never go wrong with a hot spring. My trips usually go like this: “Is it by mile marker 155 or 151?” “It’s just before the bridge.” “You mean the one we just passed?”

K: Keg nachos. The Tamrack serves up a virtual mountain of chips, cheese, beans and jalapeños in a keg top. Sit outside on the patio and try finishing them. My track record is 1:1 — demolished them with two buddies after a cycling race, but barely made a dent with my roommate and my girlfriend last winter.

L: Lakes. Take your pick: Flathead, Seeley, Como … All perfect for a day of paddleboarding, boating or swimming. You know, lake stuff.

M: Missoula Marathon. Don’t worry, I’m not saying you have to do a full 26.2-mile run to check off this bucket list item. But the Missoula Marathon is a weekend full of activities you should definitely take part in. Run the 5k, the half marathon, the full marathon (ouch) or the beer run! Not a runner? Volunteer along the course and cheer on thousands of sweaty pedestrians.

Night sky. Take advantage of minimal light pollution and look up. The stars are brilliantly visible, especially if you go just a few miles out of the valley. The Blue Mountain Observatory offers free public viewing nights throughout the summer.

O: The Osprey. Missoula’s minor league baseball team plays at Ogren field right next to the river. It’s the American pastime and it can be the best low-key way to spend an evening chilling with your friends.

P: Peak. Peak a mountain, preferably one not visible from town. St. Mary or Trapper Peak down the Bitterroot are tall, easy and make perfect day trips.

Q: Quaff (21+). We have enough breweries in town to keep you busy for weeks finding your favorite. Quaff down a pint every day. You know, for your health.

R: River fun. Nary a day will go by that you won’t be able to walk across the footbridge by campus without seeing crowds of people lounging down the river, gracefully plopped in an old tire tube, soaking their butts with ice-cold river water. Put in at East Missoula and take out on campus or at Caras Park.

S: Smoke: If we get through the summer without wildfires filling the valley with smoke, did summer even happen? Take a deep breath, and then go on vacation.

Teste Festy. If you’ve never heard of this, or of Rocky Mountain Oysters, nothing I write here will prepare you for this infamous celebration of a bull’s most private parts. It’s in August. Enjoy.

U: Unplug. Ideally this means you’ve been away from an outlet for roughly 16 hours, which is a good start.

V: Vagabond. Take a trip where you live in your car or couch surf with friends. It smells like freedom.

W: Work. Get a job, ya hippie. It helps pay for all your adventures.

X: XXXX. They’re enormous. They’re red. They mark the end of Higgins Ave. Look at them and wonder why they’re there. (They’re an art installation called “Crossings” made by artist Taag Peterson in 1986.)

Y: Yellowstone. The other national park in our vicinity. Summer is peak tourist season, so stay on the edges to avoid tour buses.

Zootown. You live here now. Embrace every opportunity. This concludes your bucket list.
Grizzly athletics is looking for the next Monte, the beloved bear that runs around Washington-Grizzly Stadium to pump up Griz Nation. Auditions for the position are open to all full-time students who think they have what it takes to represent the University of Montana as its iconic mascot.

Five people have registered for this year’s mascot tryouts, which will be held April 27 and 28 at the Adams Center. Although the number is similar to past years, the athletic department is hoping to get more to audition in order to give Monte the chance to be the best he can be, according to Brynn Molloy, assistant director of marketing and communications for UM Athletics.

UM Athletics is working with University Relations to get the word out about tryouts. Molloy emphasized that the tryouts are open and that Monte’s role is important to the University.

“Monte is a recognizable and loveable mascot,” she said. “He represents the University of Montana and Grizzly athletics at sporting events and helps make each event more of an experience than just a game for kids and adults.”

Molloy said most people don’t know UM holds mascot tryouts every year, similar to the dance and cheer teams. She said having annual tryouts keeps the Spirit Squad working hard to improve year round.

In addition to being a source of entertainment at Griz games, Monte also makes appearances on campus, in the community and around the state on behalf of the University. A former Monte talked about the role the bear plays in the community. He asked not to be named. According to Molloy, it is a long-standing tradition for the Monte mascot to remain anonymous.

“Monte has always been admired by Missoula ... He is a party enhancer and a walking logo of the University,” said the former mascot, who said he’d encourage anyone who is interested to try out for the position. “You’re able to not only act like another character, but become that character.”

It was fun and exciting to wear the costume at events, but he said he also learned a lot about performing and the fine details of entertainment. And you don’t necessarily need to be a sports guru to be the mascot.

“A knowledge of the basic rules of sports helps with your timing, understanding of situations and performance. But it isn’t absolutely crucial,” he said. “I think the passion for your team comes whether you’re a sports fan or not. You are associated with [the team] and everyone loves winning. So it makes it easy to get caught up in the passion and root for your team with full enthusiasm.”

After being an award-winning mascot at UM, this Monte left in fall 2016 to carry on his career as Clutch, the mascot for the Houston Rockets. He said Monte had national coverage and professional attention that gained him a good reputation. The NBA reached out to him for the job.

He auditioned with a skit he’d performed as Monte that combined gymnastics and dance.

“Monte is known for his crazy tumbling and dancing skills as well as silly antics,” Molloy said. This year’s tryouts will include an in-person interview as well as tumbling, dancing and acting.

Those skills are important, but to Monte/Clutch, creativity is the biggest factor in being a successful mascot. He said sports teams have enormous pressure to produce fun, creative and original content on a constant basis.

Being a mascot is more than just putting on a suit to make people laugh, and it can definitely become a career, he said. His official job title in Houston isn’t Clutch — it’s “Entertainment Specialist.”

“Professional mascot may sound like an oxymoron because you’re kind of being paid to act like a silly idiot at times. But there is much more to a mascot than the silly side,” he said. “You are constantly meeting with clients and in a work environment where you need to act appropriately.”

Monte/Clutch emphasized that his time at UM gave him many opportunities after college. He said he knows a lot of NBA mascots who started in college and are still very happy with what they’re doing. He also said that several people have gone a different direction with the help and jumpstart of being a mascot.

“It’s an incredible opportunity that helps you make important contacts,” he said, adding that it opens doors to possibilities of professional mascot jobs, entertainment and marketing positions, acting and theater work, and even business and ownership options.

Being Monte is a year-round commitment, similar to being a student athlete or member of the Spirit Squad, Molloy said.

“While it might be a lot of time, it is work that is very rewarding and can lead to tremendous opportunities after graduation,” she said.

Molloy said they are looking for someone who can “live up to Monte’s persona” and represent the University. Anyone selected as Monte must be a full-time UM student and be in good academic standing in order to get scholarship assistance.

For more information about requirements, expectations and financial aid, contact Assistant Marketing Director and Mascot Coordinator, McKell Bennett at mckell.bennett@mso.umt.edu. To register to tryout to be Monte, visit www.gogriz.com/montetryout.
SPORTS

SAVING GOODBYE

The Final View: So long and thanks for reading

In 2014, the Montana Kaimin gave this young journalism student a chance. I had done some writing for the Montana athletic department and the sports editor, Jesse Flickinger, reached out to me through email. The rest, as the cliché goes, is history. As we print our final paper of the year and I wrap up my senior year, I’ve been reflecting on my college career and there was one thing that was present in all the highs and the lows: this newspaper. I wanted to say a few words about it, if you’ll allow me.

The Kaimin gave me the chance to do what I love. My first story for the newspaper was about head basketball coach Travis DeCuire, who was still only midway through his first season at Montana. It compared him to other former Griz players who would eventually become head coaches for the program as well, and I was able to chat with both Larry Krystkowiak and Wayne Tinkle for it. I’ve been writing about the teams and the sports I love ever since.

The Kaimin gave me some of the greatest joys of my life. There was handing out Gameday Kaimins to fans at Griz football games with the whole staff there to celebrate and publicize your work. It took a huge effort from our team to make the special editions and getting together to spread them to campus (and occasionally take a few Jell-o shots) was such a rewarding feeling.

The Kaimin staff became more of a family than a group of colleagues. The Kaimin office became a safe space, somewhere I could go if I ever needed to chat, get some homework done or just play a game of Mario Kart to pass the time. I spent an ample amount of time sitting in my little cubicle with the Canadian flag talking with the people who would become some of my best friends.

The Kaimin also gave me hard times. I ended up leading our staff on November 8, 2016. I arrived in the office early that morning, eager to begin managing content from reporters that had travelled all across the state and sending people on assignments around campus to cover the elections. I left the offices in the early hours of the next morning, still waiting for the final result. I sat alone in my home, watching my laptop screen until Donald Trump officially became president so I could run our final story of the day online. In a newsroom full of strong and independent women who are all destined for greatness, it was difficult to take in.

The Kaimin gave me the chance to work with so many incredible people. I have worked with 14 different sports writers and editors in my time and have learned so much from each and every one of them. They make my job more fun and I can’t thank them enough for the work they’ve done. I learned from Nadia White, who advised the Kaimin for so long and taught me a lot about the business and myself. This year, Jule Banville stepped in and guided this staff to another great year. Our Pollner professors, who help make this thing happen, include Kevin Van Valkenburg, Melissa McCoy, Anne Bailey and so many others that helped shape me as a young journalist. This staff has a high rate of turnover, but also a high rate of dedicated, intelligent journalists.

The Kaimin gave me love. They say workplace romances don’t work, but I’ve watched enough of “The Office” to know that’s not true. Safe to say I found my Pam.

The Kaimin made my college career. I’ve laughed, cried, screamed, hugged and so much more in my years here. I thank you for reading along, and I thank the entire staff for letting me do what I’ve loved for so long. It’s been one hell of a ride.

Margaret Grayson, Claire Chandler and Jackson Wagner hand out Gameday Kaimins before the Griz-Cat game Nov. 19, 2016.

JACKSON WAGNER
jackson.wagner@umontana.edu
@jackson_wagner

montanakaimin.com April 25-May 2, 2018 15
Sign or renew your lease and you could win a semester of FREE RENT!

The earlier you sign, the more chances you have to win!

**APRIL**
Free pizza for a year!

**MAY**
Free groceries for a year!

**JUNE**
Free gas for a year!

**JULY**
Free rent for a semester!

http://liveatroam.com/