

MONTANA



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Michael Wright, M.D., a sports medicine specialist at Missoula Bone and Joint, examines a previously injured knee at his office on Wednesday morning.

State corrects voter info

Pamphlets were out of date due to changes

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Montanans this year can register to vote until the polls close at 8 p.m. on Election Day and will be able to vote with school IDs and other forms of identification that worked in years past, according to Secretary of State Christi Jacobsen.

Jacobsen's office this week issued a correction to the informational voter pamphlets that get mailed out before each federal general election, sent this year three weeks after a state district court judge struck down several new laws related to voting. The state published 509,324 copies of the document, which county governments pay to distribute.

"The voter information pamphlet sent to the mailboxes of voters from mid-September through mid-October was in production prior to the judicial order enjoining Montana's identification and registration laws," stated a press release from her office.

Voters still must arrive at their polling place with some form of ID, if they're voting in person. That can include a driver's license, state ID, tribal photo ID or college ID. If they don't have those, voters can provide an official document with their name and address, including a voter registration card, utility bill, bank statement, paycheck or official government document.

Yellowstone County District Court Judge Michael G. Moses last month found that several laws enacted by Republicans in 2021 violated the state constitution. They include laws moving to an earlier date the deadline for voters to register, creating stricter requirements for voter ID at the polls and outlawing paid ballot collection by third parties.

Jacobsen, the sole defendant in the case, has not said publicly whether she will appeal the order to the Montana Supreme Court. But she has done so twice before on prior rulings in the case. And after Moses's most recent ruling, her office issued a statement that "we are not going to let down the fight to make Montana elections the most secure and accessible elections in the nation."

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WWAMI instills 'sense of community' in future docs

Medical program educates students from across MT

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For the last 50 years the WWAMI Medical Education program has worked to educate medical students from Montana to combat limited access to health care in communities across the state.

As of last year, a total 1,047 students entered the Montana WWAMI program through the University of Washington School of Medicine, producing 791 graduates. Of the graduates, about 340 have practiced medicine in Montana.

"There's a lot of really, really good benefits with it," said Dr. Michael Wright, who graduated from the program in 2011. "It really tries to get Montana doctors to come back to Montana and practice after they do their medical training."

Wright now lives in Missoula and works at the Missoula Bone and Joint clinic as an orthopedic surgeon specializing in sports medicine surgeries. Wright has a younger brother and two un-

cles who are also graduates of the WWAMI program.

Wright could have pursued his degree outside of the WWAMI program, but looking back he's glad he was admitted into his top choice for medical school.

"It really ingrained a sense of community and just allowed me to have full ownership over my education," Wright said. "With the WWAMI program I think I got a much more broad picture of what life really is like as a doctor earlier in my education."

The acronym represents the five rural states that make up the cooperative medical education program: Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana and Idaho. Through WWAMI, students are able to pay in-state tuition while earning their degrees, which makes it more cost-effective for many aspiring physicians.

The Montana-based program first launched with a class of 10 students. Two years later, the program grew to accept 20 students each year. In 2013 the Montana Legislature issued support to expand to accept 30 students annually.

Like many physicians who have gone through the program, second-year student Riley Galt's

interest in pursuing a career in health care was first ignited when she was young. By high school she started directing her studies and extracurriculars to continue exploring those possibilities.

"Growing up, it was kind of just always in the back of my mind that helping people in that capacity was something that always interested me and I liked the relationship aspect of it," Galt said.

Before being admitted, Galt also worked as a Certified Nursing Assistant at assisted living facilities and hospitals. She was drawn to WWAMI for its opportunities in family medicine and rural health care as well as gaining early exposure in clinical settings, which is not typical of many medical schools.

"A majority of our time is spent in the classroom, but being able to go into the hospital or go into a primary care clinic once a week has been so awesome," Galt said. "Hearing about that as a pre-med student, that's what you look forward to the most, interacting with patients and developing those relationships."

Just as the number of students accepted to WWAMI has grown over time, so have the training opportunities for future physi-

cians.

Montana State University in Bozeman serves as the main hub where all students in the state spend 18 months to start their experience in medical school. Eventually, students are placed in every corner of the state for clinical rotations and other work experience from Sidney, to Libby, Hardin and beyond through a variety of rural-specific programs.

"That's kind of another mission of the program is to get future doctors kind of ingrained in smaller communities that have a high health care need," Wright said.

The Targeted Rural Underserved Track (TRUST) and WWAMI Rural Integrated Training Experience (WRITE) programs seek to increase access to health care in rural communities by immersing physicians in training into those places.

Those opportunities in rural communities are what initially attracted Kaylee Stein, a first year student originally from Eureka, to attend the WWAMI program in Montana because she wanted to return to serve the communities she was educated in.

Woman dies in Hwy. 93 crash north of Polson

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A 62-year-old woman died on Thursday evening in a fatal collision north of Polson.

Lake County emergency teams responded to a two-vehicle, head-on crash at 7:15 p.m. The incident happened north of mile marker 65 by Jette Hill and Sunnyslope, according to a press release from the Lake County Sheriff's Office.

Colleen Kelley, of Polson, died as a result of the collision. She was the only occupant in one of the cars, the release stated. The condition of the passengers in the second car was not provided.

Traffic was diverted for over two hours. Montana Highway Patrol is investigating the cause of the accident, while the Lake County Coroner's Office is looking into the cause of death.

"We send our condolences to the family and friends of Ms. Kelley," the press release stated.

Film on Montana women to screen at UM

MARGA LINCOLN
For the Independent Record

HELENA — Yes, more than one woman has contributed to Montana's rich history.

Yet, most people think of Jeannette Rankin and then their minds go blank.

Well, several enterprising, history-loving women set out to change that.

The result is a 40-minute documentary film, "The Story of Us: The Women Who Shaped Montana."

The film is slated to be broadcast on Montana PBS in the future, according to filmmaker Kimberly Hogberg. (It will

screen at 6 p.m. Nov. 2 in the University Center Theater at the University of Montana.)

North By Northwest and the Extreme History Project collaborated on it, said the Helena native, who is a producer and editor with NXNW.

The film focuses on the stories and contributions of four fascinating women who overcame some seemingly insurmountable odds to be successful: Sarah Bickford, Rose Hum Lee, Maggie



Bickford



Hogberg

Smith Hathaway and Susie Walking Bear Yellowtail.

"I love that each of them is very unique and different and had struggles ... but they did amazing things," during times it was difficult for women to do much of anything outside their homes, said Hogberg.

"The first woman in the film is Sarah Bickford, who probably faced the most adversity," said Hogberg, although none of the women had an easy life.

She was born a slave and would go on to become the first female owner of a water utility in Montana — and likely the first Black woman water utility owner in the country.

She arrived in Virginia City working as a nanny for an associate justice of the Montana Territorial Supreme Court.

She married a miner, John Brown, who physically abused her. They had three children — all of whom died from childhood diseases.

She was granted a divorce and left Montana. But she decided

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State prison to suspend visitation indefinitely

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The Montana State Prison will suspend visitation indefinitely at the end of the month, another workaround necessitated by the hollowed-out workforce at the facility outside Deer Lodge.

Visitation is set to end Oct. 31. The Montana Department of Corrections said Thursday

that "after much deliberation," it deemed the suspension necessary due to the prison's staffing levels. According to a department report in August, an estimated one-third of the 257 correctional officer positions were open.

"We recognize the importance of in-person visitation to inmates and their friends

and families, but we must place safety and security of the public, staff, and inmates above all else," Department of Corrections spokesperson Carolyn Bright said in an email on Thursday, adding the department intends to resume normal visitation "as soon as it is safely possible."

According to the National

Institute of Corrections, a division of the U.S. Department of Justice, visitation plays a significant role in reducing recidivism. The institute's 2011 study found "any visit reduced the risk of recidivism by 13% for felony convictions and 25% for technical violations."

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