The Hellgate Lance

Parking Jurisdiction Changes Impact Hellgate

Quinn Stromberg
Editor

At Hellgate, the only large public high school in Missoula without a parking lot for students, everyone is used to parallel parking on residential streets. The Missoula Parking Commission (MPC) has always had jurisdiction over these streets around the school; that's why there are parking enforcement officers and students will sometimes receive tickets for parking in 2-hour parking zones.

The recent expansion of the MPC's jurisdiction covers the northern part of the Hip Strip. As of now, they are simply enforcing the 2-hour limits on this side of the bridge. Although, changes are in the works, meaning the parking situation around Hellgate for students will look different in following years.

"Those jurisdictions never really impacted the parking situation at Hellgate, however with this new jurisdiction comes a new master plan for Missoula as a whole, concurrently with the Missoula Parking Commission," said Ryall Pham, Hellgate senior and intern at the Missoula Parking Commission.

These changes are due to the fact that the area around the Hip Strip has met the MPC's criteria for expansion into new parking zones; studies showed over 75% occupancy in parking around the Hip Strip, both during the school year and in the summer. This is because the Hip Strip is a highly congested area, due to the residential streets and numerous businesses—and often year-round construction—all within a few blocks. Residents feel as if visitors to the businesses often take up a majority of parking spaces outside their homes. Hellgate students are then left to find whatever parking they can around the school.

"There is going to be a parking permit program that will be enacted within the Missoula parking commission's jurisdiction—that'll happen in a year or so. It'll be very affordable, on the basis of what other permits usually cost," said Pham. At the University of Montana, students with cars have to pay $250 for their permits. Alternatively, at Big Sky High School students pay $25 a year for permits to park in their school parking lot. The permits required for Hellgate students in the coming years are expected to be in the same range as Big Sky's permits—around $25 per year, or around $100 for all four years.

"Using the term 'pay for parking' at the moment when it's only a parking permit is kind of weird because it makes it seem like you're paying every time you park there, when in reality you're paying once every year to get a parking permit, and you can park whenever you want within that area for free after you pay for the permit," said Pham in response to students opposing having to pay to park to attend a public school.

The hope for these permits is to stem the parking spillover into residential neighborhoods by providing parking to "those who need it most," which includes residents and Hellgate students. "This in no way is an attack on Hellgate; this is for everybody in the area. It just happens to be that Hellgate is the most central, and we have over a thousand students, the vast majority [of whom] drive to school. [Students make up] quite a few stakeholders in an area that's mostly made of residents and businesses," explained Pham.

With the incoming construction of apartment buildings at the corner of Myrtle and 4th St, there is expected to be an increase in density and demand for parking. The permits will ensure parking space for residents and students who frequent these streets during and after the construction.

There are no plans to add meters to the streets around the Hip Strip at this time, though that is a goal for the distant future. The MPC recognizes that the Hip Strip requires different parking management strategies than the Central Business District, which will be decided on and enforced accordingly.

For now, the MPC is beginning to enforce the existing 2-hour signage as a starting point to encourage turnover and open up parking spots around these businesses. Students can expect parking permits to begin being enforced within the next year.

"[This allows the MPC to] operate in a way that allows people to park effectively, making Missoula safer and more sustainable," said Pham.

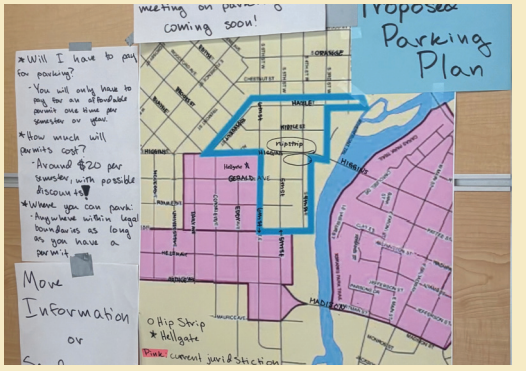
Concerns still remain from Hellgate students and faculty, and are based on the fact that these new permits might disadvantage students in a number of ways. In an email to the Hellgate community, Principal Judson Miller said, "I expressed my opposition and concern regarding any kind of process that would add complexity or 'barriers' to our HHS."

In his email, Miller attached a link to the MPC's "Engage Missoula" webpage that details their next steps for introducing new parking jurisdictions to the community. The MPC visited a Hellgate Student Government in early March to begin talks with the school about the changes and are planning an ice cream social (suggested by the Hellgate Student Government) as a way to allow students and residents to engage with each other as these changes become implemented.

The webpage clearly states, "None of the stakeholders currently support paid daily or hourly parking as a solution," and "… students want to ensure that the cost of a permit is affordable for all students and accessible to obtain."

The process for setting up these permits is still in the works, so issues such as what will happen for people occupying parking spaces during after school events and activities are still being discussed.

The webpage says a mapping tool will be posted in late April to gather more specific information regarding location and parking demand. Students can expect more details in the coming weeks on what exactly these parking permits mean for Hellgate and what changes will be made.



Information on parking changes posted at the front of the school. Photo by Quinn Stromberg.

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Editors
Elliotte Banziger
Will Hansen
Quinn Stromberg

Reporters
Zach Baldwin
Weslley Banziger
Eleanor Billingsley
Carsten Bowen
Joaquin Brodie
Anais Currie-Inglizian
Gus Darty
Juliet Giarraputo
Sabine Glaser
Piper Goris
Jayne Jensco
Kingston Kimpell
Ellie Lopuch
Mai McKelvey-Pham
Noah Morss
Hadley Sharp

Adviser
Jill Derryberry

Publisher
Judson Miller

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University of Montana's 'J Day' Draws High School Journalists From Across the State

Weslley Banziger
Reporter

One of the many events the University of Montana hosts for high school students happened on April 16th. This event was called J Day, where not only students from Missoula but students from all around the state got invited to learn new techniques and lessons in journalism.

The day is planned by the University of Montana, where many professors from the journalism school led activities for high school students. The day was broken up into three blocks and students got to pick which lessons they would attend.

All of these lessons can be extremely beneficial for students and help them discover more about journalism. There were some lessons that stood out. These were not just interesting to learn about but also interactive and entertaining to the students in attendance.

The first was photo journalism and International Journalism with Professor Holly Prickett, where Prickett explained her experiences going overseas to report on wars and explained the safest ways to do this.

The second workshop was news anchoring, letting students become news anchors themselves with Professor Denise Dowling and Ray Fanning. This was an interactive experience where students got to be in front of the camera or working behind the scenes. This created a fun and unique experience for everyone to enjoy.

And finally, helping students create opinions and reviews was Opinions 101: I Have Thoughts with Professor Jule Banville. Students were asked to watch a short film called the Record of Life and create a sentence for the start of an article they would write on it.

When asked what her favorite part was, sophomore Rasa Smith said "The sun glasses definitely," as every student in attendance gets a free bag of collectables provided by the university which included sun glasses.

Smith also said her favorite activity was Let's Talk Podcast with Mary Auld where the students got to go out onto the campus and interview anyone they liked, conducting street interviews.

Although very interesting, these are not the only events that happened at J Day. Many high school students and their newspapers got awarded for their hard work and dedication.

Specific writers won awards like Hellgate's Will Hansen, Sabine Glaser, Kingston Kimpell, and Gus Darty all placing in the top three for multiple different awards like First Place News Writing (Hansen), First Place Photo Illustration (Darty), and First Place Feature Photography (Glaser)

The Hellgate Lance also won overall awards for Newspaper Pacesetter which means The Lance is the best overall newspaper in the state for multiple years in a row now. The Lance also won Best Newspaper Design and came in second for Online Pacesetter.

Overall this was an incredible experience and was extremely fun for everyone. Students were able to meet new people from all around the state who have an interest in journalism, which was incredibly fun, and if any student has the chance to go, it is definitely worth it.

The staff of the Hellgate Lance with their awards won at Journalism Day.
Graphic by Jill DerryBerry

‘It Just Makes Me Sad’: Hellgate Teachers Criticize Skipping Culture

Will Hansen
Editor

Several years ago, Hellgate history teacher Juliana Arechaga was forced to spend a weekend emailing parents informing them that their children weren’t coming to class. Arechaga was personally trying out a new attendance policy: attempting to lean on parents to quell the epidemic of poor attendance in her classes.

“My young daughter came into the room and wanted to play with me,” she said. “I was like ‘not now, I have to email parents. I’m working.’”

After a while, Arechaga’s daughter, who had dreamed of being a teacher, responded tearfully. “I hate this. I hate your stupid job. I never want to be a teacher,” she said. “I’m not going to ignore my daughter the way you ignore me.”

Arechaga said that is when the scale of the attendance issue at Hellgate hit her: “I am spending hours and hours trying to convince parents to send their kids to school. Meanwhile, on my own time, I’m not playing with my own kid?”

Arechaga’s experience is not uncommon; Hellgate teachers have been growing increasingly frustrated with poor attendance from students despite efforts from administration. This issue, teachers say, can have drastic consequences for students both academically and in the long term.

“I think there’s a bit of a culture at [Hellgate] that has normalized skipping, even for freshmen as soon as they get here,” said Spanish teacher Chaucer Larson. “That, I don’t quite understand.”

Arechaga agreed: “Attendance is not as high as it should be,” she said. “That’s the struggle right now.”

Arechaga said that both students and administration alike have not prioritized attendance, resulting in the current problems perceived by teachers. “I think it’s hard when you get to have a culture where attendance is not seen as important,” she said. “It’s not seen as an issue, and then it becomes hard to enforce.”

Attendance is not a new struggle for Hellgate or other schools across the country. The COVID-19 Pandemic had a drastically negative impact on attendance, more than doubling the percentage of schools dealing with chronic absence nationwide according to Attendance Works.

“During COVID, there was a push for everything to be on Google Classroom, which is understandable, but it leads to a feeling of you don’t need to come to class because everything’s online,” Arechaga said.

“I think kids just by nature want an easy option if it’s available,” said Principal Judson Miller. “So kids will do remote work on repeat rather than go to class if it’s available because it’s easier.”

COVID’s effect on Hellgate’s attendance was long-term. Pre-COVID, the school’s daily absenteeism percentage, or the percentage of the student body not at school, was around 10%. Two years post-COVID, it was 26%.

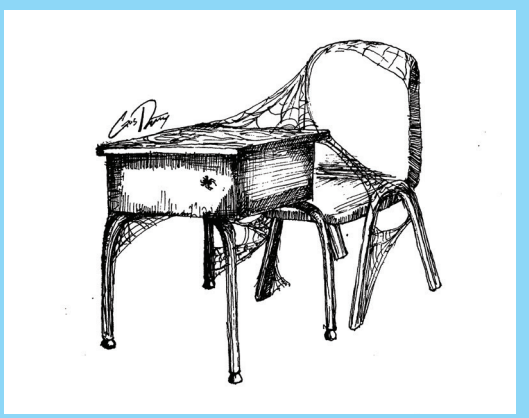
However, Miller said that quantitatively, the school is doing much better with attendance. At the beginning of the year, absenteeism was down to pre-COVID levels at 9%, and mid-March it was at 14%, a spike he attributes to a yearly decrease in attendance in the spring.

“I understand that sometimes people get frustrated and they say ‘well everybody skips,’” Miller said. “My response is, well, that’s not accurate. That’s not what the data says.”

Despite this data, Hellgate’s teachers are still extremely unhappy with current attendance trends.

“I get extremely frustrated because a lot goes into the work we give you,” said Anna Bacon, an English teacher. “Your teachers work extremely hard to plan every single day for you, even if it’s just a work day. It is so frustrating when you see a kid in the hallway and not coming to class, because it feels like we are not getting back the work we have given you.”

Arechaga seconded this sentiment, saying that the “hours and hours” teachers spend putting together lesson plans feel invalidated when students make the choice not to come to class.



Graphic by Gus Darty.

Larson said he has personally struggled to accept that he can’t be there for students to help them with issues if they are not showing up for class. He said he has worked hard to create an environment where students can come to him with their problems, but if students aren’t physically coming to that environment, then that cannot happen.

Poor attendance not only has a negative effect on teachers but students as well. Miller described the impact on the basic function of classes as “detrimental.”

“If you go to English class and there’s a Socratic seminar set up, it depends on attendance,” he said. “If you go to science for a lab, it depends on having lab partners.”

These effects are impacting grades as well. “Every F that I have in my classes is simply because of kids not being there and therefore not turning assignments in,” Bacon said. She said grades are on average lower for her students than they were before COVID, and she thinks the drop in attendance is to blame.

Miller said efforts to curb the attendance crisis have been and are being made. The Hellgate administration’s goal is to shift away from the COVID-induced online availability of high school back to the way it was before the pandemic.

“We decided to emphasize in-person work so a kid couldn’t just access Google Classroom and do all of the work and never attend the class,” Miller said. He also said that if in-person traditional education is not working for a student, there are other options, like Connect Academy, MCPS’s online education program, or Willard, the district’s alternative high school.

“If kids are choosing to come to Hellgate, I am under the assumption that they are not choosing to go to Connect, and they are not choosing to go to Willard,” Miller said. “They like Hellgate because of what it provides.”

“It’s an ongoing conversation about respect,” Miller said. “We will continue to work on creating the best lessons, and we need [students] to continue to partner with us and be a participant in everything the school has to offer. Or it’s like… just go to Connect then. If you want an online experience, I can provide that.”

Despite these efforts, Hellgate’s attendance is still an ongoing issue, at least in the eyes of the teachers. Bacon said that because of the complexity of the issue, there is not one clear solution.

She discussed the idea of a stricter attendance policy, but this brings up its own challenges. “The state of Montana is proficiency based, so kids are allowed to show that they are proficient in a subject and that time physically in a seat does not matter,“ Bacon said. This makes it difficult if not impossible for schools to legally enforce in-person attendance, forcing teachers to take matters into their own hands, attempting to fix the problem on a classroom-to-classroom basis.

Both Bacon and Arechaga discussed introducing stricter deadlines and heavier workloads, which Bacon said she has “had a lot of success with.” Arechaga said that teachers have been encouraged to assign in-person work at a higher volume.

“But I hate busy work,” she said. “I don’t want to give out three assignments a week of pointless things just to get kids to come to class.”

Larson said that the solution has to come from every level of the issue. “I think our pieces here are teachers, students, family members, and administration,” he said. “Everyone has to do their part.”

“Kids just have to start taking accountability,” Bacon said. “You have to meet us half way.”

The issue of chronic absenteeism, or even just casual skipping, puts teachers in an extremely difficult position where they are not able to help their students. Lack of attendance is a “slippery slope,” according to Larson, and at a certain point teachers have done all they can.

“Something that I’ve thought of a lot the last few months is that every kid has the right to succeed in school,” Bacon said. “Every kid also has the right to fail.”

Hellgate APS Students Sweep State Science Fair

Mai McKelvey-Pham
Reporter

On Mar. 30, 13 students attended the 2026 Montana Science Fair (MSF), hosted by the University of Montana. These were sophomores, juniors, and seniors who have been in the Advanced Problems in Science (APS), a research-based class taught by Willow Affleck.

This year, continuing a four-year run, Hellgate won 1st place overall for the Large High School section. Almost every student in APS was awarded a Gold Ribbon for their poster and presentation (the highest participation award), and eight students achieved more specific awards as well, including several UM department awards, American Association for Laboratory Animal Science Award (Solen Duwell-Le Bihan), Best Project by a Junior (Maia Fishman-Miller), the Marie Wallace Scholarship (Clara Woodbridge), and the Regeneron Biomedical Science Award (Flynn Kier).

Two students from Hellgate qualified for the Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), which means they won the state science fair overall. Senior Ella Stone was awarded the highest award at MSF, the MSF Larry Fauque Grand Award for 1st place overall (as well as the UM College of Health, 1st place), and junior Camille Cellier won the MSF Grand Award for 2nd place overall (as well as the UM College of Forestry and Conservation Award, 1st place).

Stone and Cellier both completed projects with impressive real-world implications. When asked to explain their projects in layperson's terms, these were their summaries:

Stone studied "[a] type of therapy program called an intensive comprehensive aphasia program, or an ICAP. This is for people with aphasia, which is the really common communication disorder following a stroke—when individuals can't talk or write or understand language."

Meanwhile, Cellier explained that she "looked at the different bird communities existing in various forest structures that are a result of different forest treatments…that we use to mitigate wildfires."

APS is a very interesting and almost completely student-led class. All of the APS students have been working all year on collegiate-level science projects with both local mentors as well as mentors from around the country. In fact, it's been more than a calendar year. APS students begin the process by reaching out to professors and grad students in March of the school year prior to when they'll enroll in the class.

"You can study anything you want, anything you're interested in," explained Cellier. After choosing a field of study, students will read papers from prospective mentors to try and familiarize themselves with the research. "For me," Cellier said, "the process of finding a mentor was just sending out lots and lots of emails and getting no response. I think that happens for a lot of people… I was super fortunate to be accepted."

Once they have a mentor and a project, the students' goal is to finish all their data and work during the summer. That way, they're able to work on papers, conclusions, and presentations during the school year to prepare for the science fairs they'll attend in the spring.

While APS is not technically a college-level course, like APs and IBs, the science fairs and the research itself prepares students for science at a higher level. "It has taught me so many skills and things that I'll take with me beyond [high school]," said Stone. "I've become a much better public speaker, along with actually knowing how to go about a research project, and what conducting research at that higher level looks like."

Cellier agreed, but also emphasized a skill she learned: communication. "It's kind of scary to be a high school student reaching out to grad students and professors and people with doctorates, but it's such an important thing to know how to do… it's a super important skill that I now have that I wouldn't have if it hadn't been for this class."

One of the most important things that Stone and Cellier agreed on was, as Stone put it, learning "how important research is to the scientific community."

Stone and Cellier will continue this learning alongside the nation's best high school scientists in Phoenix, Arizona on May 9-15 when they attend ISEF.

Senior Ella Stone and junior Camille Cellier hold first and second place trophies at Montana Science Fair. Photo courtesy of CJ Gimpelson.

Hellgate SAVE Club Holds Annual 'Trashion Show'

Ellie Lopuch
Reporter

The SAVE Club Trashion Show is an annual event held during Earth Week. This year on April 24 in the Hellgate Upper Gym, students got the chance to show off their creativity featuring outfits made entirely of recycled materials. According to board member Genevieve Hedstrom, the goal of this event is "to blend fashion and environmental activism to promote sustainability and make students more mindful of their waste."

The Trashion Show is hosted by Hellgate High School's SAVE Club which handles Hellgate's recycling and manages the school's greenhouse. "SAVE also looks to improve awareness of and participation in environmental causes in the school and the community," said Eric Ojala, SAVE's supervisor.

This event is open to all students of Hellgate to present their unique designs made entirely of recycled materials, including cloth, paper, plastic, and metal. Models display student made designs down a runway which are then judged by volunteer teachers on creativity, practicality, cohesion of items, and model performance. The top scoring designers are then awarded prizes donated by local Missoula businesses.

The SAVE Club board consists of seven SAVE members; Genevieve Hedstrom, Chloe Groves, Sasha Cowie, Maria Saenz, Lucia Cherubini, Robbie Gibbons, and Ellette Whitcomb.

When it came to putting on the Trashion Show, "it was a definite group effort," Groves said. All board members helped to ensure that the show was possible and "we utilized our individual strengths to do so."

The Trashion Show benefits and spreads awareness of the environment in many ways. "Rather than letting something go to the landfill, [students] start thinking of how they can incorporate it into their outfit, imagining the different uses the item can have around their house without having to throw it away, ultimately being part of the goal of bettering the environment," Saenz said.

"It helps to bring awareness to the fast fashion industry and shows how people can be creatively involved in the effort of helping our environment," Groves said.

Earth Week leading up to the Trashion Show was full of a variety of projects and events. According to Hedstrom, April 18 was

SAVE's monthly groundwater measurements event in Greenough Park. Their partnership with Watershed Education Network (WEN) gave them the opportunity to help out with community science, using the student's findings for different studies and research projects around the state.

SAVE also partnered with the Hellgate Key Club for the Clark Fork River Bank Cleanup which occurred the morning of April 18. Volunteers helped clean up the Clark Fork river by removing trash and recyclable materials.

Throughout Earth Week SAVE brought in presenters to Hellgate to educate students on environmental topics. Presenters included Pesticide Free Missoula, Home Resource, and Watershed Education Network.

The entire week and Trashion Show event would not have been possible without the amazing SAVE Club members' organization and commitment to bettering the planet. The week's events successfully highlighted the importance of environmental protection and community awareness in an engaging and creative way.

Contestants of the 2026 Trashion Show. From left to right; Lindley Erickson, Miles Shefloe, Genevieve Hedstrom, Selena Meyer-Lavo, Jember Chaney, Chloe Groves. Photo courtesy of Maria Saenz.

Genevieve Hedstrom models dress made of old Lance copies. Photo by Kingston Kimpell.

2009-2019: A Golden Age for Hellgate Spirit

Will Hansen
Editor
Gus Darty
Reporter

Several days ago, we walked into newspaper class to find Ms. Derryberry's table littered with old copies of our beloved newspaper. We spent a period looking back through our predecessors' work, and what we came to realize was that Hellgate has officially exited its "Golden Age," a time where the student body was energetic and spirited, happenings at Hellgate were exciting, and the world was clean and pure.

Hellgate's Golden Age can broadly be defined as the period from 2009-2019, when an avalanche of school spirit seemed to careen down every outlet for students from their freshman to senior years. This time period reflects an age when it was cool to be passionate, to strut down the hallway with a now unseen genuine confidence. Our society today is reliant on social media fads that dictate our composure. The coolest people are the least considerate, and the common traits associated with popularity have changed over time to reflect an overwhelming and general indifference.

When examining copies of the Lance from the Golden Age, the first thing we noticed was an absence of this dynamic. The student body displayed a sort of joyful indifference to the opinions of others, manifesting in a genuine and animated mood about the building. Without the subconscious fear of judgment that plagues us all in this day and age, however insignificant or profound it may be person-to-person, Hellgate students were happier and more carefree. It was clear based on facial expressions alone that they were, in a word, themselves. This led to louder student sections at sporting events, a more diverse range of expertise, and a set of surprising and unique Hellgate occurrences not seen today.

For example, during the 2018 Homecoming football game in which Hellgate broke a historic six-year losing streak (some things never change), the field was graced by the appearance of three streakers. While this behaviour isn't necessarily appropriate, it is indicative of a broader, more genuine, spirited and energetic student culture. These three miscreants were so overcome with joy, unhindered by concern for what peers, teachers, and SRO's would think of them, that they chose to declothe themselves bare before the city in a show of school spirit. Such an occurrence, which by no means is advisable in a literal sense but serves as an example of the conditions defining an age passed, would be unthinkable for the current Hellgate student body.

Shameless demonstrations of both effort and spirit were common. In 2009, a sophomore at the time named Connor Glynn hand-crafted a red and gold Hellgate suit out of duct tape and wore it to school for Spirit Week. While commonplace at the time, a Hellgate student today would much rather spend the hours required to make Glynn's outfit scrolling TikTok, the suit becoming the same tried and true sweats and hoodie worn yesterday.

Today, the average high school is defined by a different set of rules, causing students to be afraid of being their true, spirited selves. This reality can be tracked through Hellgate's loss of spirit gradually, even as recently as from our freshman to senior years. Goat week, an event that would have surely been a conduit of uproar and rowdiness in the Golden Age, seemed more and more like a second thought to many Knights this year. Spirit Weeks feel sparsely participated in as the general saturation of the student body's personality dissipates into doldrum.

Hellgate's Golden Age consisted of a more energetic and genuine student body overflowing with school spirit. Graphic by Will Hansen using Lance archives.

When we were freshmen, the spirited nature of seniors like Jules Lane and Carter Polanchek inspired us to get rowdy. With one of us being senior class president and the other winning the "most spirited" senior superlative, their intensity has obviously left impressions on us. We just wish that their impacts could have been translated to the younger classes, or even some of our classmates.

As we simultaneously realize that our time within the halls of Hellgate is it nearing its end and reflect back over our senior year and broader career as a Knight, we can only conclude that we have failed you. We have failed to be the role models that legends like Lane and Polanchek were to us, those jumping and screaming figures looming large at the front of every student section. A school's energy is only as good as that of its senior class, and by that way of reasoning ours was insufficient. The class of '26 certainly didn't end the Golden Age, but we did little to revive it.

However, there is still hope. This existential threat can still be corrected. The student body must simply embrace the forgotten art of rowdiness and reject the creeping vines of nonchalance that have denied the Knights their castle. With the remainder of our time at this school, we will do all we can to return Hellgate to its Golden Age. However, the class of 2027 are the ones more responsible to embrace this undertaking. Let your spirit be the torch that burns the bramble from the brick and sets another age where Knights are no longer afraid to be courageous and outspoken. In retrospect of our time at Hellgate High School, the negative trends in spirit that we have seen surely exist, but they are far from being set in stone. We have a strong adoration for our school, and wish to see it returned to its former glory. Never be afraid to "Be A Knight."

Unemployment: Dream for Some, Harsh Reality for Others

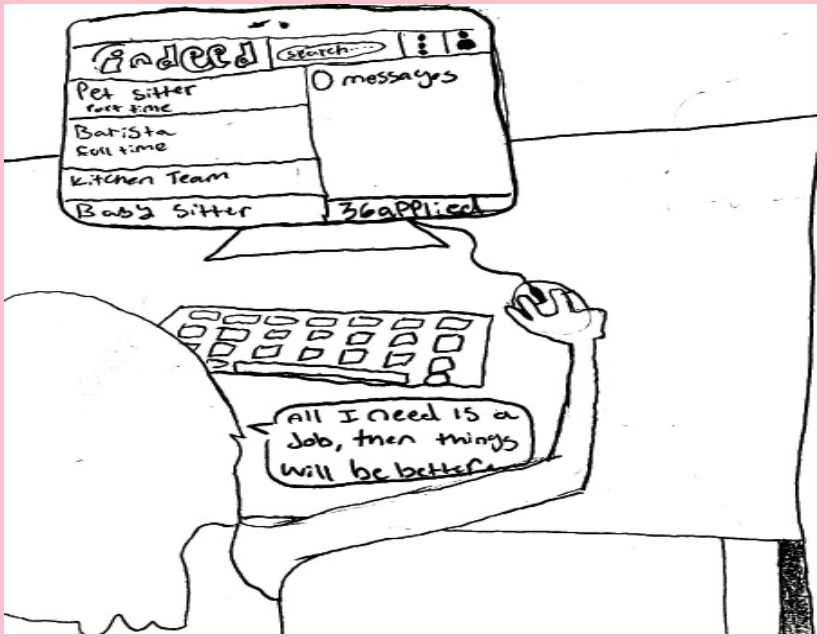
Kingston Kimpell
Reporter

In today's society, the world revolves around wealth, goods that are bought and sold, and investing. In order to have these things you need to have a source of income, employment. A daunting use of your time for some, and stability for others. Jobs can be taxing and require a lot of energy, but I believe that the treacherous journey of job searching is worse.

The stigma surrounding unemployment is contrasting. For some it is viewed as being freed from shackles and being granted freedom to use your time however you would like to. But even through that feeling of freedom, the pressure of needing to be employed will come to bring you down. Whether it be pressure from your peers, the constant feeling of being "lower" than your peers who are in fact employed, the strain of needing to buy food and basic necessities in order to survive or this burden of not spending your time "as you should" and feeling lazy.

The word "unemployed" is often used as an insult, an excuse to belittle someone. Even though oftentimes people aren't just unemployed because they don't want a job, they are unemployed because they can't find one. Though there are thousands of job listings posted throughout the internet on sites like indeed and craigslist, there is a great chance that you will not be selected for the position, or even reached out to for an interview with the employer. This cycle of applying for every job that you can find, then not being selected for any, and then waiting for new listings and starting over on applying again is extremely undesirable and can leave you feeling like you are unwanted in the work industry. The repetition of this process leads to self doubt and leaves you with less motivation to continue job searching.

For this reason I believe that the derogatory use of the word "unemployed" should not be used, or at least should be used less. There is already enough stress surrounding job hunting and added pressure will not help most people. There has however been a surge in a positive connotation coming from this term. A sort of heavenly glow surrounding the word and all the free time it implies, time to hangout with your friends, time to create, and most importantly, time to love. Whether that love be poured into a relationship or into your own life.



Drawing by Kingston Kimpell

Throughout my multiple workplaces I have found moments of desiring that freedom, and I have had moments of hating where my life was at, because after all, life shouldn't be just a nine to five, it shouldn't have to revolve around the schedule that your manager puts out every two weeks.

Life is about loving, and I am not trying to say that having a job will make you hate your life, I am saying that having a job that just isn't for you can come with those feelings. Though it may take trial and error, there will evidently be a job that is perfect for you. A job that allows you to express yourself and allows you to have a balance of freedom and in person work time.

A bit of advice to those who are experiencing a treacherous job search is to steer away from job searching websites. Though it is very convenient, some employers don't even check the applications they have received on sites like Indeed. I have found that employers prefer a physical resume and a cover letter. I've noticed that cover letters aren't typically used when applying for jobs anymore, but they give an insight into who you really are and help you steer away from a robotic sounding resume. And of course, never give up.

Hellgate's Musical Spring

Chamber Choir members Genevieve Hedstrom, Delaney Burbach, and Elena Mangold pose after 2025 final choir concert.

Choir Events

Monday May 18th:
Musical Theatre Showcase

Tuesday, May 26th:
Choir Final Concert

Pops Concert!

Wednesday, May 13th
(orchestra, band, choir)

A longstanding Hellgate tradition, Hellgate's music programs combine for this large end of year event.

Band Events

Wednesday May 27th:
Band Final Concert

Hellgate's Wind Ensemble rehearse for upcoming spring concerts.

Orchestra Events

Wednesday April 29th:
Missoula Youth Symphony
Spring Concert

Tuesday May 19th:
Final Orchestra Concert

Hellgate's Advanced Orchestra rehearse for upcoming spring concerts.

Photos by Mai McKelvey-Pham, Noah Morss, and Genevieve Hedstrom

May 1 Deadline Marks Change In Seniors' Lives

Anais Currie Inglizian
Reporter

May 1 is always a big day for seniors who choose to go to college but also for people who decide to follow a different path besides attending university. As National Decision Day is the final deadline to commit to colleges, seniors start to feel the pressure of picking a school. It often brings a plethora of emotions, such as excitement, stress, and uncertainty because most college decisions come out in late March and early April. Many students do not have a lot of time to choose where they are going to spend their next four years, but there are some who have committed as early as December.

Sylvie Semanoff, a current senior, applied Early Decision to Washington University in St. Louis, MO. WashU is a medium size, private research university. Early Decision means that if you are accepted to the college, the offer is binding–with some exceptions, such as financial aid. When asked why she applied Early Decision, Semanoff said, "I just wanted the whole college process to be really short and easy…I finished my application over the summer and had no stress."

Similarly, Aiden Latrielle-Marsh also applied Early Decision to Middlebury College in Vermont, which is a private, liberal arts college. He chose to attend Middlebury because it was the best school he applied to. "I chose to apply because it's a small campus in a natural location," Latrielle-Marsh said. He plans to study Environmental Sciences. "To be super honest I did not think I was going to get in, so I took the chance and I am happy that I did. I don't have any stress about applying anywhere else," Latrielle-Marsh said. It is important to take into consideration all aspects when choosing where to go. That may include location, school size, financial aid, and opportunities at school.

Joshua Na is, however, still deciding as he is still trying to figure out where he wants to attend school. "Currently my top choice is Swarthmore because it has a really strong education for my major," Na said. He wants to study Political Science and Anthropology. Swarthmore is a small liberal arts school located in Pennsylvania.

Financial aid is also very important when deciding where to go. "All my schools gave me good financial aid, so I really didn't have to worry about that one," Na said. Without the stress of cost, it comes down to things like educational goals and location.

Other students are attending school to play collegiate-level sports. AK Puryear is going to Michigan Tech to play soccer and study sports and fitness management. "I committed right before soccer tryouts, so about mid-August. It is pretty chill because I only had to apply to one school, so then it was pretty easy to go from there," said Puryear. Michigan Tech is a public research university in Houghton County Michigan.

For many students who have not been committed since first semester, it is often an intense period because of how little time they have to choose what they want to do the following year. It consists of visiting schools they have been accepted to, reviewing cost, and educational opportunities. In recent years, the college admissions process has become very competitive, which leaves many students feeling the pressure to commit to the "right" school. But in the end, what students decide to do after high school will lead them to the right path for their future. Although May 1 may seem like a scary, looming deadline, it also represents a time in a senior's life when they move on from high school and into the real world.

Hellgate also has an Instagram page for seniors to post their decision for what they will do the following year, such as college, a gap year, or another sort of program.

Map and flags showing where seniors plan to attend school or other career paths. Photo by Anais Currie Inglizian.

Squish then Scroll: The Viral Fidget Frenzy

Jayne Jencso
Reporter

What began as a helpful sensory aid has quickly developed into one of the most turbulent consumer crazes of the social media era. Fidget toys like Needoh— squishy, satisfying stress balls filled with gel—are the centerpiece of a colossal trend that has reshaped many consumers' habits and is catching the attention of environmentalists.

Different from recent fidget trends like Pop Its, Needoh appeals to sensory satisfaction instead of sound. TikTok heightens the attraction: slow motion shots, exaggerated stretches, and the soothing deformation of the beloved tools pulls in millions of likes. Creators have founded a squishy ecosystem by showcasing collections, rating their strengths, or even cutting them open. Fidget toys are no longer a mild desk accessory but a viral spectacle.

A spectacle causing extreme consumeristic behavior. Stores like Target have reported their shipments of sensory tools vanishing in hours, teens trade information on restock dates just to avoid the week long sellouts. Online shops and resellers have begun capitalizing on demand and skyrocketing their prices. Kids are no longer asking for one Needoh, they want dozens. They demand unique colors, textures, and rare designs.

Photo of some of the most popular figets found around school; The Needoh Dream Drop and The Needoh Nice Cube

This cycle has ballooned teen overconsumption. TikTok fidget hauls and squishy collection tours have normalized the hoarding of copious amounts of almost identical toys. It isn't even about using them anymore, the emphasis is on how aesthetically pleasing the toys look lined up, the rarity of certain versions, or how many one person can accumulate. Young social media users especially feel the pressure to track trends, turning a simple purchase into an addictive spending problem.

"Watching people unbox squishies in bulk feels like mocking those who can't afford or can't find the squishies that are selling out because of a trend." - Spencer M, Grade 11

Environmental supporters have begun to feel unsettled. Toys like Needoh often use a synthetic rubber or silicone casing and are filled with strange proprietary compounds. This may sound durable in common theory, but most fidgets break after a week or two of use— especially if they are subjected to TikTok's viral "stress test". Damaged Needohs are almost impossible to recycle and always find their way into a landfill. Gen Z's rapid attention span only exacerbates the problem, as new models rise into favor, old ones swiftly fall into the trash.

Fidget Toys have never claimed to be disposable. With origins tracing back to tools used by therapeutic specialists to sooth clients anxiety through sensory regulation, teachers have long used stress balls or miscellaneous fidgets for the benefit of tactile engagement. With this context, these objects are an aid, and intended for a long time meaningful purpose, not dopamine hits.

"Being able to mindlessly fidget while I work helps me be able to focus." - Evelyn C, Grade 11

Social media has flipped this concept upside down. TikTok's algorithm pushes novelty and craves visual appeal, driving manufacturers to make more and more variations while the attention is still on them. New glitter filled Needohs, and cute animal designs are constantly named limited edition, feeding a cycle of rapid materialism and the desire to stay relevant.

Currently, the slowrising squish of a Nice Cube Needoh defines the satisfying trend. But underneath layers of goo hides a much more complicated story— one speaking on viral hive mentality, consumer pressure, and the environmental price of chasing the next big thing.

Art Done Jay's Way: 'Missoula's Story'

EB Billingsley
Reporter

I didn't expect to stay long when I walked into Relic Gallery downtown. I was just looking around when I noticed the artwork on the walls, lots of black and white prints, detailed and intense; , it is the kind of art that makes you stop instead of just glancing. It felt very historical, butalso rebellious, it was art that had something to say.

Then Brian Sippy walked up to me and started talking. It wasn't robotic or rehearsed or formal. Instead he spoke quite quickly and passionately, very clearly excited to be sharing the story behind the art. He began telling me about Jay Rummel, an artist whose work helped shape Missoula's creative culture but whose name has faded over time. "Jay tried to make sure people's stories weren't lost," Brian said. "And now his story is getting lost."

Sippy is a retired eye surgeon who stayed deeply involved in Missoula's art community long after leaving medicine. In early 2020, he helped open a contemporary art gallery downtown. Six weeks later, the pandemic shut everything down. "We barely launched," he said. "Then suddenly, nothing was happening."

With extra space and time, Brian decided to do something different. He opened Relic Gallery, a space dedicated to heritage artists (artists who had passed away but whose works living artists are still building on). During the pandemic, as people sorted through old belongings, Sippy began finding artwork by Montana artists that had ended up out of state. "People were going through their grandma's stuff," he explained. "It was going onto eBay, and I had the opportunity to buy it and bring it back to Montana."

That's how he became deeply involved with Jay Rummel's work. "I just loved his aesthetic," Sippy said. "It was smart. It was a fusion of psychedelic culture, folk art, Native heritage, cowboy culture, just this huge amalgam of influences." Over the course of the pandemic, Sippy restored and reframed dozens of Rummel's pieces, treating them as fine art and reintroducing them to the Missoula community.

Jay Rummel was born in Helena and studied art in Missoula before spending years in San Francisco during the psychedelic movement. When he returned he brought those influences back with him. "He was a historian," Brian said, "but he ran history through his own filter." Rummel once referred to his work as "Mystical Histories," a phrase that perfectly captures how his art blends fact, imagination, and symbolism.

Despite his immense talent, Rummel never found financial success. "This guy was probably one of the best artists in western Montana," Zeiment, the director said, "and he's trading his art for his beer tab.," Zeimet added. Rummel struggled with alcoholism and died young, on December 31, 1997.

When I returned later to interview Brian, I unexpectedly met the director, Ben Zeiment, and the producer, Elizabeth Stegmaier of an upcoming documentary about Rummel. They told me that what began as a 12 to 15 minute short film quickly turned into something much bigger. "We realized pretty fast this story had legs," Zeimet said. "It became a really intimate piece about Jay."

The filmmakers have spent the past yearish interviewing more than 35 people, traveling to places Rummel lived, and uncovering archival footage from an unfinished documentary started in the early 1990s. "Someone had boxes of tapes sitting in their garage for 30 years," Stegmaier said. "We didn't even know that footage existed."

The film doesn't just focus on Rummel's art. It also explores addiction, family fractures, and what it means to create without recognition. "He was an artist who couldn't always get out of his own way," Zeimet said, "but he made an incredible amount of work."

What stood out to me the most throughout this experience was Sippy's urgency. "You're from here," he said to me. "And his name isn't off the top of your head, right? That's the problem. It's time to tell his story."

Rummel lived in Missoula during a pivotal moment, when the town was shifting from a blue collar logging town into the creative, artistic community it is today. His art reflects that change and captures a version of Missoula that still shapes the city now. "This isn't just Jay's story, " Brain said. "It's Missoula's story."

When I walked out of the gallery I realized how rare it is to witness someone care so much and so deeply about preserving local history. Sometimes all it takes is an unexpected conversation to understand that art isn't just something to look at, it's how a community remembers itself.

Rummel is known for his intricate prints, such as these that were part of the collection displayed Relic Gallery in April. Photo by EB Billingsley.

Olivia Rodrigo's New Single Foreshadows Successful Album

Elliotte Banziger
Editor

Olivia Rodrigo's "drop dead" single cover (left) and *you seem pretty sad for a girl so in love* album cover (right) showcase the different direction taken with her third studio album.

A love story, some pop/rock vibes, but still reminiscent of her earlier works, Olivia Rodrigo's new single "drop dead" released on Apr. 17 on all streaming platforms. As a longtime fan of Rodrigo's, this new single was super exciting for me and a lot of other fans of hers.

"drop dead" is her newest release preceding the drop of her new album, *you seem pretty sad for a girl so in love,* which will be available for streaming on June 12. This is a pretty big deviation from her earlier works which were defined by a four letter album title: *SOUR* (2021) and *GUTS* (2023), and a purple theme.

you seem pretty sad for a girl so in love obviously has a much longer title than either of her other albums and the color theme seems to be more of a pink and blue theme.

"drop dead" is only Rodrigo's second love song, the other one being "So American" from *GUTS (spilled)*, the deluxe edition of *GUTS.* So it being the first song she releases before the rest of the album is a pretty good hint at the slight genre shift that Rodrigo seems to be aiming for with her third studio album.

Prior to this, most of her songs have been about breakups, troubled relationships, or her experience of teenage existence. So opening up her newest album with a bonafide love song hints to a pretty big shift.

The single definitely has her signature vibe to it. It is sort of a mix of pop and rock, which Rodrigo has experimented with many times throughout her career, and she puts a heavy emphasis on her band, another thing she has done many times.

Many of her previous songs, and likely most of these upcoming ones too, do an incredible job of showcasing Rodrigo's singing while also portraying a lot of talent within her band, leading to incredible backtracks that make her music distinct from other artists.

Rodrigo's lyricism is also one of her most defining abilities. It is what brought her to stardom in the first place with her debut single "drivers license" released in 2021. Many listeners were blown away by her incredible lyrics and her ability to make people connect with her.

She is able to make people empathize with her experiences even without experiencing that themselves, and "drop dead" is no different. Rodrigo captures the audience in all of the feelings that come from a first date, to the excitement of being with this new person, the curiosity of a first time hang out, and the anxiety of liking someone so much after such a short amount of time.

Rodrigo also released a music video to go along with her single. The video has incredible visual elements, as it was filmed in the Palace of Versailles, keeping the audience engaged and surrounded by beautiful artwork. She also includes a lot of fun camera angles and movements, which really makes the video stand out and captures that slightly wonky first date feeling.

Overall, *you seem pretty sad for a girl so in love* is likely going to be an absolutely incredible album. "drop dead" is absolutely a song to go listen to, it's a really great listen and is a wonderful combination of her songs from the past and the new direction she is seemingly taking on.

Hellgate Football Breaks Records in Representation at the Montana East-West Shrine Game

Gus Darty
Reporter

Graphic created by Gus Darty. Photo elements courtesy of Kate Hansen and Sidney Marsden.

On June 20, 2026, the Montana East-West Shrine Game takes place in Naranche Stadium in Butte. On that day, all of the greatest senior football athletes from across the state will represent the West and East divisions in a game designed to fundraise and promote the care offered by Shriner's Children's Hospital in Spokane, Washington.

It's an honor for these athletes, as all of their hard work and dedication to their sport leads to well-deserved recognition. This year, for the first year in recorded history for the Shrine Game, three, potentially four, Hellgate High School athletes are on the roster for the West division.

Players Parker Link, Evan Pyron and Vince Paffhausen have joined the 40-man roster to compete this year, with Sam Cohea as an alternate if another player is unable to participate in the game.

"It means a lot to the community," said Paffhausen, Hellgate's quarterback who committed to Montana Tech this fall. "In the time that I've been following Hellgate, which is my whole life, I can't remember a time where there were three Hellgate football players in it ... to have three people in it and one alternate, I think that means a lot and just gives a lot of younger kids coming up into the Hellgate football community some hope that 'yeah, we haven't been great in these past years, but we have some people that are capable as long as you stick with the grind and follow coaching.'"

The last time that Hellgate football was represented at the Shrine Game was in 2022, with two athletes, Ian Finch and Tommy Nilson. Using the archive on the game's website shows the participants from every high school going back almost 30 years. The highest number of participants from Hellgate since 2000 has never been above two in the past, showing the distinction that Hellgate's group of athletes this year have set a new precedent.

"It's really good representation," said Pyron, who, with fellow Shrine Game participant Parker Link, will be playing for Griz this fall. "Paul Capp (Hellgate's athletic trainer) was telling me the other day that he's only had two Knights in there in his eight years here prior to this year, so it's really important to putting Hellgate on the map and showing that there can be really successful football athletes that come out of this program and school."

Link had similar views about the importance of the game. "The Shrine Game has been around longer in Montana than in any other state in the country (...) Knowing that I have the opportunity to play in that, and knowing how big of a deal it is for fundraising for Shriner's, but also going out and competing with the state is a wonderful idea," said Link.

Hellgate Football has been on a journey as a program for a long time, going through long losing streaks with only one or two sparse wins a season being the story for decades. However, this year, the Knights made the playoffs for the first time since 1994. The inclusion of Link, Paffhausen, Pyron and potentially Cohea on the Shrine Game roster is another important marker of the progress the team has made through years of hard work and dedication.

This honor is not just a success for the program, however. It is a deeply personal achievement for the participating Knights. "It's a great feeling knowing that we're putting Hellgate on the map more, and showing Missoula and the rest of the kids that, even though your school might not have the greatest football team, there's still the capability of making it into the big moments and games," said Link.

"It's crazy to think that I get to play one last game with Parker and Evan, I mean, we've been playing with each other our whole lives. Just getting another game with them will mean a lot," said Paffhausen.

Unfortunately, Link suffered an injury during the basketball season, tearing his meniscus and leaving him unable to compete in the upcoming Shrine Game.

Still, Hellgate's athletes are optimistic and excited to play in such a historic game for the franchise. "Emotions are high, and it's just a great feeling to play with some of the best athletes around Montana," said Paffhausen.

Hellgate Prepares for End of Spring Sports

Zach Baldwin
Reporter

Hellgate is closing out its spring sports season as teams prepare for upcoming Class AA state competitions in track and field, softball, baseball, and tennis.

The track and field team is entering the postseason after a series of qualifying meets, with athletes aiming to secure top finishes at the Class AA state meet on May 28-30 in Missoula. Ahead of the state tournament, athletes must compete at divisionals, where they can qualify if they don't meet the qualifying standard. Competitors who have met qualifying standards throughout the season will represent Hellgate in individual and relay events.

Senior high jumper Elly Reed said she had been frustrated with the scheduling and cancellations in the season due to the variable weather Montana has been having this spring. "We're feeling like there are limited opportunities for us to perform before we go and compete in college," she said about the seniors on the team.

Going into the month of the state meet, Reed said, "I think that winning the state championship is always the goal, the dream, but friendship and the connections we have on this team are what makes it special."

"I totally agree about strengthening the community and spending time with all the people," said Gia Petrini, a varsity distance runner, "I just want to PR on my events and have my best season possible."

Both Reed and Petrini are going forward to compete at the Division 1 level in college, making this season incredibly important for training, performance, and also for fun as it caps off their senior year.

"I think Hellgate, compared to other schools, has a smaller team, so that makes it a lot easier for us to grow those relationships and connections, since we're all around one another and always interacting with the same group," Reed said.

In softball, Hellgate is working toward a spot in the Class AA state tournament bracket. Teams across the state compete in divisional play to determine seeding, with top performers advancing to the state competition.

The baseball team is also approaching postseason play, with conference standings determining qualification and placement in the Class AA state tournament. Consistent performance late in the season is key as teams compete for limited state spots.

Meanwhile, the tennis team has completed regular season matches and will send qualified players to the Class AA state tournament. Both singles and doubles competitors advance based on results from divisional tournaments. A highlight for the end of this tennis season is the possible chance for senior Elliotte Banziger to take home the individual title for the fourth year in a row.

All four programs are focused on strong finishes as the Montana Class AA state competitions approach in the last week of May, marking the culmination of the spring high school sports season.

Ella Stone (above) and Jack Currie Welch (below) playing at a Hellgate tennis practice. Photos courtesy of Hana Takesue.

SPRINGTIME AT THE CASTLE

A THEMED CROSSWORD

BY SABINE GLASER

DOWN

1. HELLGATE'S ONLY TRACK SPORT THAT HAILS BACK TO OUR MASCOT
3. BALSAMORHIZA SAGITTATA.
4. WHEN A PLAYER MUST WIN TWO BACK TO BACK POINTS IN TENNIS
5. THE AMERICAS ARE HOSTING IT THIS YEAR
6. COMMON DIAGNOSIS AMONG THE ELDER KNIGHTS OF THE CASTLE
7. SUBJECT OF AN UPCOMING SPANISH PRESENTATION IN MILTON'S CLASS. ALSO, A FRUIT SPELLED THE SAME IN BOTH ENGLISH AND SPANISH.
10. THE MONTH OF FREEDOM
11. RUGBY TOURNAMENT FEATURING 6 TEAMS OF NORTHERN EUROPE
12. THEY'LL EITHER SAY YES OR NO, BUT EITHER WAY IT WILL BE AWKWARD. DONT FORGET THE GLITTER AND POSTER PAPER
13. PROJECT ____ ____
14. AS THE SUN FINALLY COMES OUT, MOST WILL SUFFER THIS RATHER THAN HAVING A NICE TAN

ACROSS

2. A MUCH HOPED FOR BUT RARELY OBTAINED END TO AN AP TEST
7. PLATFORM FOR SUCH TESTS
8. NONCOMMITTAL, IMPASSIVE TREND, COLLOQUIALLY
9. EVERYONE'S FAVORITE TRACK COACH, SINCE AT LEAST 1953
10. THEY HOLD THE REINS IN THE UPCOMING TRIPLE CROWN
11. MISSOULA'S HIGHSCHOOL RUGBY TEAM
15. COMMON ELEMENT OF HUMOR SEEN IN 12-DOWN (S)
16. AFTER A PRE-PROM DINNER, THIS WILL BE A REAL BREATH-SAVER
17. BLONDE STAR OF RECENT ANDY WEIR ADAPTATION