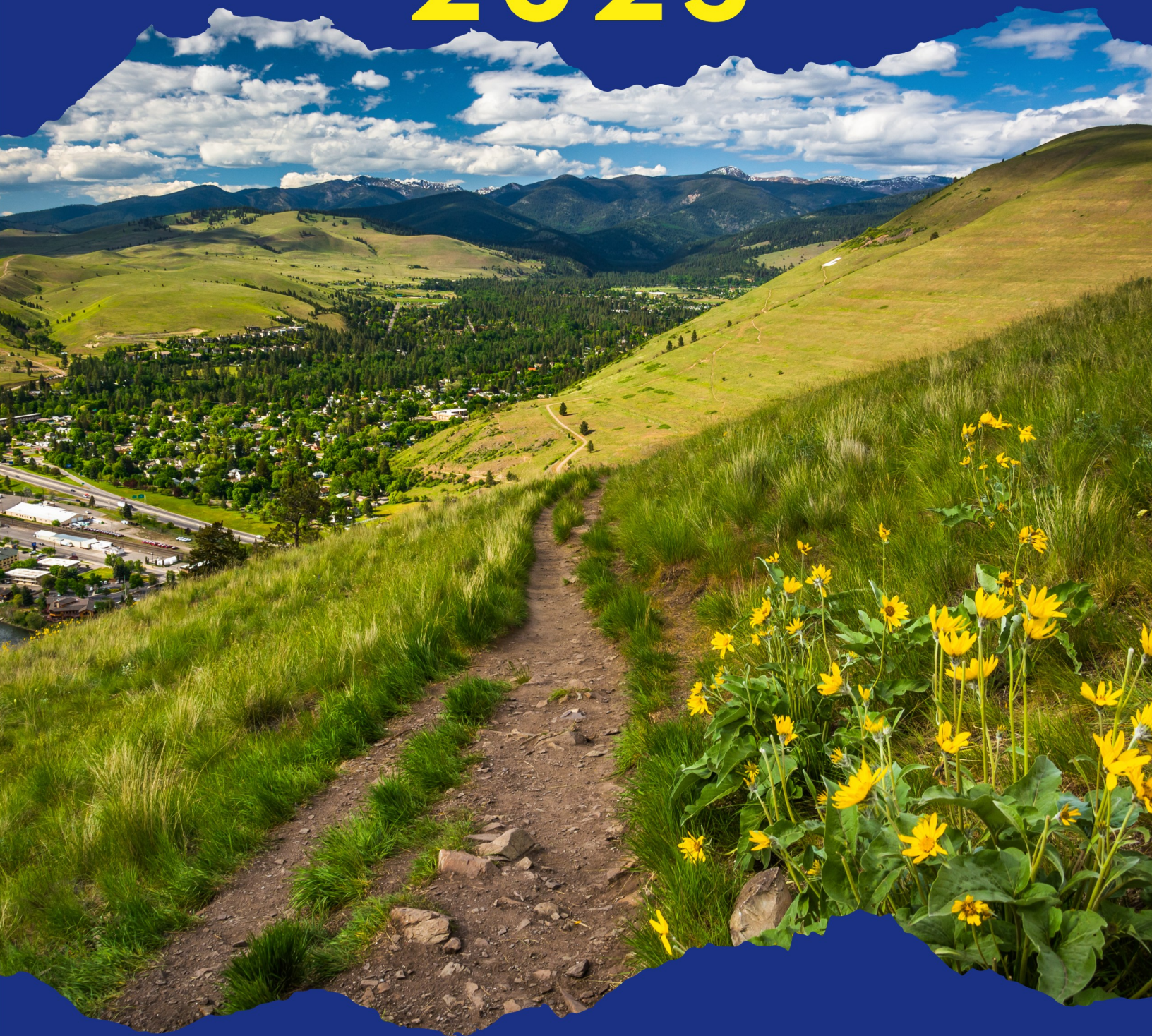


BRIGHT FUTURES 2025



FIND YOUR OWN PATH

MONTANA GEAR UP & EDUCATIONAL TALENT SEARCH



Montana GEAR UP (MTGU) directly supports Montana students by teaching them the skills needed to succeed in life after high school. Administered by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, the federally funded program works with 12 rural school districts across the state to provide supplemental services such as tutoring, dual enrollment course opportunities, college and career exploration, and financial aid counseling and advising.

QUICK FACTS

- GEAR UP is an acronym for **G**aining **E**arly **A**wareness and **R**eadiness for **U**ndergraduate **P**rograms.
- GEAR UP serves students in 7-12th grade in 12 school districts to improve high school graduation and college enrollment rates.
- The program partners with postsecondary institutions to support GEAR UP college freshmen with their transitions to and retention in college.



Montana Educational Talent Search (METS) is a TRIO program federally funded by the Department of Education. Through tutoring, counseling, workshops, and educational trips, METS makes postsecondary education more accessible for students, especially those from low-income backgrounds who are the first in their families to attend college.

QUICK FACTS

- METS serves school districts in the Blackfeet, Crow, Flathead, and Great Falls service areas, where pre-college advisors work directly with students to achieve their goals.
- METS programming includes STEM-focused workshops, covering topics such as engineering, robotics, chromatography, and chemistry.
- Participating in METS makes students eligible for exclusive scholarships during their senior year, including the TRIO Achievement Grant.



@montanagearup

@mt_mus



Montana GEAR UP

MT Educational Talent Search

LETTER FROM PROGRAM DIRECTORS

Welcome to the 2025 edition of *Bright Futures*!

Each year we celebrate the remarkable achievements of Montana GEAR UP (MTGU) and Montana Educational Talent Search (METS) students. As Directors of these two programs, we are continually inspired by the dedication, resilience, and passion demonstrated by each student.

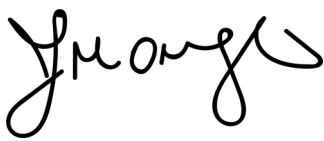
To the students, we extend our heartfelt congratulations on your accomplishments. Your hard work, determination, and commitment to your education and future goals are truly commendable. From overcoming personal challenges to mastering academic subjects, each milestone you reach is a testament to your strength and perseverance. Your achievements not only reflect your individual talents but also serve as beacons of hope and inspiration for others.

We'd also like to express our deepest appreciation to the educators, counselors, mentors, and supporters who play a vital role in the success of these students. Your guidance, encouragement, and support empower students to reach for the stars and follow their dreams with confidence.

In this publication, you will find stories of students from across the state in different stages of their journeys: students finishing middle school and graduating high school. Some of these stories will include academic achievements, extracurricular accomplishments, and recognition of vital support systems. You will find METS students, MTGU students, and students who participate in both programs. All students, though, have inspiring career and educational goals.

Once again, congratulations to our students! Thank you to our educators and supporters for your unwavering dedication and commitment. Together, we are making a difference in the lives of our students and shaping a brighter future for generations to come.

Warmest regards,



Jeannie Origbo, Director
Montana GEAR UP



Anthony Warren, Director
Montana Educational Talent Search





KIERSTEN TRAYER, SENIOR
ST. REGIS HIGH SCHOOL-MTGU

For Kiersten Trayer, growing up in St. Regis meant a close-knit community, hardworking parents, and opportunities to help her fellow students succeed. Throughout school, she has used inspiration from her mom, a small business owner, to excel in both academics and athletics. This support both challenged and rewarded her during high school, where Kiersten is graduating as valedictorian. Kiersten has continuously developed her leadership and teamwork skills playing on the volleyball, basketball, and track teams, and was named “Athlete of the Year” as a junior.

She has also shown off her business acumen with her Business Professionals of America team, taking first place in the “Global Marketing” category at the state tournament. Using the resources available to her through MTGU, Kiersten has already earned an associate degree from Great Falls College MSU. In addition, she’s gained early college credit by taking multiple dual enrollment courses, which will give her a head start this fall at Loyola Marymount University. Kiersten will be majoring in psychology with a career focus as a pediatric psychologist.



ALI HOLM, 8th GRADE
NORTH MIDDLE SCHOOL-METS

On the cusp of high school, Ali Holm is excited to challenge herself and help others in years to come. Ali admits she’s talkative but plans to channel this quality into peer mentorship and speech and debate. She feels prepared for the rich learning environment ahead with study and testing skills acquired in METS workshops. Ali encourages classmates to join METS to get out of their comfort zones, meet new people, and receive help academically and personally. Outside of school, Ali enjoys competitive dancing, dirt biking, and camping. These hobbies allow her to express herself without words, release stress, disconnect from technology, and connect with family. Ali also hopes to stay close to family in her future career, aspiring to work as a plumber or contractor with her father’s business. As she progresses toward her goals, Ali wants her high school teachers to know that she’s hardworking, kind, empathetic, fun, and sure to make them laugh.



LOIS ANN DeCRANE, SENIOR
LODGE GRASS HIGH SCHOOL-MTGU & METS

Lois Ann DeCrane had childhood career ambitions of working at a zoo or an art museum, and her artistic side will be the focus of her postsecondary education. She plans to major in graphic design at Montana State University which is “far but not too far” from where she grew up. Keen to follow in her mother’s footsteps by attending college, Lois is excited to experience higher education and credits METS and MTGU staff with starting the discussion on what she wanted to study. She may even continue dabbling in robotics or archery at MSU, but only time will tell.



MATEO BROWN, SENIOR
BOX ELDER HIGH SCHOOL-MTGU

Wanting to improve his community's mental health opportunities led Mateo Brown to pursuing a psychology degree at the University of Montana. He chose UM to stay in state and continue toward a doctoral program. Encouraged by his parents, Mateo believes in a well-rounded and balanced education. He is looking forward to the opportunities that college will bring, including meeting new people and attending social events, as well as representing his background with his fellow students. Mateo will use his volunteer experience with the local Tribal Youth Council to build new pathways and relationships in Missoula.



PEIGHTON KENNEY, SENIOR
THOMPSON FALLS HIGH SCHOOL-MTGU

Peighton Kenney knew from the moment she first walked through her kindergarten class door she would be an educator. Like her role model, Mrs. Gwynn, she wants to teach third grade. Inspired to attend college with the encouragement of her family and her mom's stories of college and international travel, she will be attending UM Western because of its sterling reputation as the longest standing education program in Montana. Throughout high school, Peighton has shown an aptitude for leadership, athletics, and helping others. She has been active on the Thompson Falls track and field team and served as her school's student body president and National Honor Society vice president. In addition, she has worked to improve her community by volunteering to help raise money for the local veteran's memorial and other activities. Peighton first visited UM Western on an MTGU college visit and prepared for college after her local Rising Seniors Night, where she learned about scholarship opportunities and "everything else" needed to get ready for her postsecondary pathway. With the support of her family-as she says, "my siblings and grandparents are my biggest cheerleaders on the sidelines,"-Peighton will be teaching the next generation of third graders, maybe even in your school.



SOPHIA REINICK-OJEDA, 8th GRADE
POLSON MIDDLE SCHOOL-METS



"My hobbies have really made me who I am," explains Sophia Reinick-Ojeda, an art enthusiast preparing for life in high school. Sophia loves painting, playing the trumpet, and listening to music. She's excited for the abundant course offerings in high school that will help her pursue her hobbies as part of her education. Sophia already plans on earning a band tassel and scholarships to accompany her good grades. Participating in METS, she's been able to spend meaningful time with friends while considering different colleges. Sophia adds that she'll take her time in deciding which college is right for her. Wherever her

future takes her, art is sure to be a determining factor. Sophia continues, "When I was younger, I always doodled, and when I say always, I mean always. I was obsessed with art and knew that when I grew up, I would be an artist. I still hold this dream."



SWINN ASKAN, SENIOR

POLSON HIGH SCHOOL-METS

In her free time, Swinn Askan enjoys drawing, studying art, and crocheting. These creative endeavors are representative of her future college and career trajectory. Swinn plans to attend Montana State University, where she will pursue a degree in architecture. She looks forward to the changes that come with moving and learning to become independent while working toward future success. Her decision was greatly influenced by her math teacher, Mrs. Dupuis, who motivated Swinn to attend college.

Swinn also looks up to the integral example set by her mother, who earned multiple bachelor degrees herself. Swinn enjoyed the support of METS when working through financial aid and admissions applications, and she promises to try her best as she strives for excellence in her continuing education.



ROWEN SHERBO, SENIOR

LIBBY HIGH SCHOOL-MTGU

Being raised in a strong, college-focused family has given Rowen Sherbo the initiative to pursue his postsecondary education at the University of Montana. Driven by his community and commitment to follow his passion for helping people with their mental health, he's ready to apply lessons learned growing up in Libby. During his school career, MTGU has been an important resource for Rowen to achieve his goals. The program provided opportunities to visit multiple college campuses to "get a feel for what they offer" and paid for his dual credit courses. As he looks to graduation, Rowen says, "without GEAR UP and Ms. Malyevac I wouldn't be prepared in the slightest" to attend college. The third pillar of Rowen's success comes from the leadership skills he learned as a member of the Libby High School cross country and track teams. Participating in sports has increased his "ability to meet new faces and give back to the community" the last four years. His experiences building bonds with his teammates continue to "shape his passion" for learning.



AYNJEL'LYA MANY BEARS, SENIOR

BOX ELDER HIGH SCHOOL-MTGU



Aynjel'Lya Many Bears has been looking for the best of both worlds while researching her college options. She chose Montana State University because Bozeman will allow her to focus on her pre-med studies during the week and visit home on the weekends. In addition, her opportunity to get "a new view" of the world on campus is exciting. Her inspiration to pursue a career in medicine stems from her mother's work as an emergency medical technician. Seeing how dedicated her mother is to her profession made Aynjel'Lya want to be a doctor. She understands college is the first step toward this goal and can't wait to get started. During high school, Aynjel'Lya worked closely with student leadership on the Chippewa Cree Tribal Youth Council, uplifting youth in her community. She's looking forward to applying her leadership skills learned from the council and from being

student body president to her college experience. Aynjel'Lya's family has helped her when she's studying for an exam and encouraged her to complete her assignments. She greatly appreciates this support saying, "[T]his is what helps me push through the tough times, and they are also there to cheer me on when I reach my goals."



JASMYNE MEYERS, SENIOR

THOMPSON FALLS HIGH SCHOOL-MTGU

Starting fall semester, Jasmyne Meyers will be taking her creative talents to Montana State University to study graphic design and marketing. For most of her life, she has been creating art, which led to her interest in design. In Jasmyne's eyes, "not all art needs to be traditional," and after working on the Thompson Falls yearbook, she knew graphic design "is something [she] could see [her]self doing in the future." Inspired and encouraged by her parents, Jasmyne knew from a young age she wanted to attend college and continue a creative lifestyle. As a high school student, she understood how her parents' lives unfolded and wants to take a different educational pathway. Born and raised in Thompson Falls, Jasmyne looks forward to meeting new people from across the country. During high school, Jasmyne was motivated by her volleyball coach to push herself and will play on the club team at MSU. She was also able to take advantage of MTGU opportunities by enrolling in dual credit courses, including a college-level poetry class along with graphic design. After taking these classes, Jasmyne knew she was ready for bigger challenges!



SAWYER PULE, SENIOR

ST. IGNATIUS HIGH SCHOOL-MTGU & METS

Sawyer Pule is not one to shy away from challenges; he seeks them out. For Sawyer, "learning is more than just getting the answers right on the paper," and he is determined, despite stress and struggles along the way, to understand everything he can. Whether acquiring new skills or knowledge, he is eager to learn and pass his expertise on to others. He practices this quality frequently in his community, volunteering with the children's service at his church, mentoring new students as a Link Leader during high school, helping middle school students learn their instruments as a band aide, and volunteering at the annual carnival to benefit the Mission Bulldogs Special Olympics team. Sawyer took on additional leadership when he was elected attorney general by his peers at Montana Boys State this past year, an experience that reinforced his interest in joining the military after high school. From an early age, Sawyer enjoyed observing how mechanisms work and fixing them if needed. His childhood fascinations with aircraft, Legos, and flights in his grandfather's airplane made the Air Force a natural choice. Sawyer will complete basic training in San Antonio, Texas, at Lackland Air Force Base before enrolling at the Community College of the Air Force. There, Sawyer plans to pursue music, but he's also interested in law, psychology, and philosophy as additional fields of study. Still, Sawyer's parents recall him dancing to tunes as early as he could walk, and music has remained essential to Sawyer as he's become an accomplished saxophonist. He explains of music, "It's the only place that I can really zone in on what I'm trying to do...Time really does fly by when I have music." This May, Sawyer achieved a superior rating at the State Music Festival for his alto sax solo. Sawyer looks forward to passing on one final note of wisdom to his classmates at graduation, where he will address his peers as salutatorian.





LOGYN CROSS-NADER, SENIOR

PARIS GIBSON EDUCATION CENTER-METS

Logyn Cross-Nader's early work experience has significantly shaped her education. Wanting to do more in her position as a caregiver, Logyn sought training through a Certified Nursing Assistant program and will graduate high school having earned her CNA certification from Great Falls College MSU, where she benefited greatly from hands-on learning opportunities. First as a patient, and now as a professional, Logyn has gained extensive insight into nursing and looks forward to expanding her knowledge of medications, terminology, and diagnoses while working with patients. They continue to inspire Logyn's education as she builds relationships and fulfills her goal of helping people. She even finds time to volunteer with residents outside of work hours. Logyn's METS advisor encouraged her to pursue her dreams by finding a career she loves, and it's clear she's doing just that.



AVERIE BURNHAM, SENIOR

ST. REGIS HIGH SCHOOL-MTGU

No matter what Averie Burnham ends up doing in college and beyond, she knows that she wants to help people. With this quality, she takes after her family and community, the ever-present support systems in her life. Averie's sister encouraged her to take dual enrollment classes, and her parents have always shown great pride in her academic accomplishments, not least graduating high school with an Associate of Science degree. Coming from a small town, Averie notes feeling like the whole community is pulling for her, but the Cheesman family has been especially important to her success in school. They pushed her academically, met with her daily, and helped her select and register for the right college classes. Averie plans to pursue nursing at the postsecondary level. While she hasn't made a final decision on where she'll attend, Averie was impressed by the new facilities at Montana Tech. The realistic clinical simulations there make Butte a strong contender for Averie's college destination. Her initial goal is to become a registered nurse, and, with MTGU's assistance in kickstarting her college credits, she is well on her way to helping people in one way or another.



PATRICK WELLING-WHITTAKER, 8th GRADE

NORTH MIDDLE SCHOOL-METS

Although he hopes to graduate early, Patrick Welling-Whittaker is eager to make the most of high school. He competed in middle school football, basketball, wrestling, and track and is excited to continue the athletics that helped develop his skills in discipline, teamwork, and self-improvement. He also plans to continue participating in student government, which he credits with building the ability to set and achieve his goals, and Patrick has no shortage of college and career goals. Patrick sees himself joining the military and pursuing a career in the Navy or the Marines, after which he hopes to become a farmer or rancher in retirement. Early interests in paleontology, animals, and the environment continue to be passions for Patrick, and he hopes to integrate these passions into his education and professions after high school. He is eager to find a career that fits his personality, something that Patrick insists METS helped him do by learning about various careers, college offerings, and how to approach problems from a different angle.



RAESHAUN MANYHIDES-RIDER, SENIOR
BROWNING HIGH SCHOOL-MTGU & METS

When considering her education beyond high school, Raeshaun ManyHides-Rider knew that she wanted somewhere close to home, a community college that provided individual instruction as needed. She found that place in Flathead Valley Community College, where she plans to major in business. Raeshaun feels prepared to explore new opportunities in college and adulthood from her participation in Upward Bound and METS TRIO programs, as well as MTGU. She benefited from workshops on scholarships, FAFSA, and college applications but found attending college fairs especially helpful on her journey toward higher education. Raeshaun's parents have encouraged her to attend college, become a first-generation college graduate, and ultimately pursue a better life. She is grateful for her family's support along with that of her educational advisors, who enabled her to explore all of her interests and determine the right path for her future.



BUNNY SPARKS, 8th GRADE
TWO EAGLE RIVER SCHOOL-METS

An active and creative person, Bunny Sparks looks to excel on the basketball team for Two Eagle River School and continue to become a better person in the years to come. Beyond the court, she enjoys playing stick game, spending time with friends and family, and creating art, specializing in painting cultural images. She strives to continue expressing herself artistically in her career and is considering welding for this purpose. Also channeling her knack for technology, Bunny has the long-term goal of starting her own IT business. Participating in METS has helped her gain “a sense of the opportunities that are out there that mesh with [her] interests and aptitudes.” As she successfully works toward her goals, she wants her teachers to know that she is bright, caring, and determined to build a great life for herself and her family.



TRISTAN CRAWFORD, SENIOR
BROWNING HIGH SCHOOL-MTGU

This National Honor Society member and honor roll student looks forward to his life after high school. Growing up in Browning, Tristan Crawford saw how pain impacts the lives of people and their ability to perform daily activities. Motivated by a lack of medical professionals in rural communities, he will be attending the University of Montana this fall focusing on a physical therapy degree. The opportunity to go to college gives Tristan the chance to “see new places and meet new people,” experience a larger campus, and learn about different cultures. In his free time, Tristan will continue his involvement with the Youth Medicine Movement and hobbies including playing guitar, hiking, and working out. Tristan will continue leveraging what he learned from MTGU as he lives on his own and navigates college life. The program also provided him chances to take dual credit courses, giving him a head start on his degree.



ROBERT HAGGARD, SENIOR
RONAN HIGH SCHOOL-METS

Robert Haggard acknowledges that he is a social person and emphasizes the importance of peer and teacher support in his completion of high school. He specifically notes the mentorship of Carla Guarisco, his METS advisor, who reached out to him after dropping out and encouraged him to persist with his education. Robert's sister also significantly influenced his decision to attend college. Her patient explanations gave Robert a better grasp of economics, fostering relationships, and networking; therefore, he is intent on earning his education affordably as he starts college close to home, majoring in liberal arts at Salish Kootenai College. Thinking back on high school, Robert has a particular fondness for his time on the speech and debate team at Ronan High School. He reminisces, "I initially started out as a manager for my senior year but soon became a co-captain with another senior. She and I began showing up every day to practice purely to improve our own skills and to help the team grow along with us. Our coach recognized this and promoted us to co-captains. We both modeled commitment and dedication for the craft and subsequently served as mentors for the younger members of our team. Our combined efforts were not wasted, as I am proud to say our entire team qualified for State in 2025!" As he transitions into higher education, Robert looks forward to getting to know professors, peers, and future friends, receiving their support and offering them the same.



CARLA JADE MORIGEAU-BAKER, SENIOR
TWO EAGLE RIVER SCHOOL-METS

Carla Jade Morigeau-Baker grew up watching detective shows and documentaries with her grandma, fueling an early interest in criminology and forensics. Further interested in investigating cases of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Carla now hopes to bring attention to the issue and counteract it through career work in abuse prevention and advocacy. She'll begin pursuing these fields studying cellular biology at Salish Kootenai College, keeping her close to home and family members. Her mom models a strong work ethic, academic achievement, and independence, constantly supporting her interests and goals. Carla also draws inspiration from her cousin, Heaven Diaz, the first person in their family to attend college immediately after high school. Heaven's example encouraged Carla to prioritize career paths aligned with her passions. Through guidance from family and METS programming, Carla has identified a fulfilling route from high school. She'll bring with her experiences beading and making ribbon skirts at Nk^wusm - Salish Language School, as well as running cross country, managing the basketball teams, and taking classes in photography and pottery at Two Eagle River School. She's excited to continue pottery at SKC but also ready to get out of her comfort zone through the new experiences ahead.



KAELYN TEEPLE, 8th GRADE
ST. IGNATIUS MIDDLE SCHOOL-MTGU & METS

Although college remains a distant goal for Kaelyn Teeple, it is very much part of her eventual path. METS has allowed Kaelyn to explore postsecondary options, including college and beauty school, and gain fresh experiences with existing friends and new ones from other schools during trips. She enjoys playing volleyball, listening to music, and hanging out with family and friends. These activities keep her motivated as she gets ready for high school, where she's excited to have more freedom to choose classes.





JADA CADE BIRD, 8th GRADE

LODGE GRASS JR. HIGH SCHOOL-MTGU & METS

Jada Cade Bird has no shortage of goals moving into high school, and she's more than ready to take on new challenges. As an 8th grader this past year, Jada played volleyball and basketball with her high school's varsity teams. Competing with older athletes taught her "how to win and lose humbly and how to listen and learn from different points of view." She has become more of a team player and knows how to navigate difficult situations, skills she's carrying into high school. Jada plans to take dual enrollment courses in high school and graduate with honors at the top of her class. She also emphasizes the importance of building healthy relationships with teachers and peers to make the most of her high school career. Jada is already thinking about her postsecondary education, eyeing as many academic scholarships as possible. She credits METS with helping her consider her future at a young age, especially regarding college. Her biggest

help, however, comes from her family: "I have an amazing support system. My parents push me [to be] the best version of myself. They love me and discipline me. If it's in sports or in school, they support all my dreams. My older sister taught me hard work and dedication; whether it be small or big, hard work will always pay off. And my younger sisters taught me to be a respectful role model. My grandma is my biggest support; she's handicapped, but she doesn't let that stop her. From her, I am resilient, I am strong."



GABRIELLA WATKINS, 8th GRADE

RONAN MIDDLE SCHOOL-METS

Excited for the additional opportunities offered in the performing arts at Ronan High School, Gabriella Watkins aspires to hit the stage with the theatre arts program and to graduate with a pink honor cord for participating in band or choir for four consecutive years. Music has always been Gabriella's primary interest, reinforced by watching her sister's band concerts as a child. She hopes to pursue music after high school as well but is not limited to this passion alone. Gabriella serves as a leader in multiple extracurricular activities. Through WEB, a mentoring program for incoming 5th graders in the school district, Gabriella hosts events and games for her assigned group of mentees. Also heavily involved in 4-H, she works as a club ambassador, shows her own livestock (cat and goat), and coordinates events and activities. She enjoys giving back to her community and expressing creativity whenever possible. As Gabriella continues her education into high school, she looks forward to making more memories, her favorite part of METS so far.



LEAH MESTETH, SENIOR

ARLEE HIGH SCHOOL-MTGU

Leah Mesteth initially planned to play college basketball, however the more she researched Salish Kootenai College, the more interested she became in their Nursing program. To her, the school "is all about community, native values, and academic excellence" providing "a supportive and culturally rich environment" for learning.

Going to college will satisfy a dream for Leah and "open doors full of opportunity" with a goal of a "successful, fulfilling future" for her and her family. She's looking forward to experiencing her independence, exploring different ideas and viewpoints, and building her future helping others as a medical professional.





KASON PAGE, SENIOR
ST. IGNATIUS HIGH SCHOOL-MTGU

As a young child, Kason knew she wanted to help people through a career in medicine. With a love of children and innate kindness, this “social butterfly” will be studying at Salish Kootenai College this fall to become a pediatric travel nurse. Her long-term goal is earning her Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNA) degree. Raised in St. Ignatius, Kason has seen firsthand the importance of trained medical staff to a community. Following a job shadow at the local health clinic, she has already formulated plans to improve the facility and elderly patient care. Her journey to college began with the encouragement and backing of MTGU. The program provided her the chance to visit different colleges, learn more about scholarships, and receive educational coaching. Kason

will be heading to college with the support of her family. Her mother practices law, and her sister is also pursuing her nursing degree at Salish Kootenai College. Kason feels fortunate to have a positive family around her that understands the importance of postsecondary education. She deeply believes that future generations need positive local role models. She has already stepped into that responsibility with confidence.



DEVON NELSON, 8th GRADE
EAST MIDDLE SCHOOL-METS

From a young age, Devon Nelson has been captivated by the world of creativity, with a specific passion for writing short stories that allow her to weave tales and explore various themes. She has expanded her creative expression into digital formats, crafting narratives online that could be shared in innovative ways. Art and storytelling have always been integral to her life, serving as the primary outlets for her imagination. In high school, Devon is looking forward to art club, where she will have the chance to learn alongside students who share her interests. She is also

eager to meet new people, hear their unique stories and perspectives, and make positive impacts on their lives, just as she’s done in METS. She loves discovering new places through the program and embarking on exciting journeys alongside fellow students, all of whom are eager to carve out brighter futures for themselves. Together, they share experiences that foster personal growth and inspire each other to reach their goals. Devon dreams of taking over her family's farm, where she envisions growing a variety of crops, aiming to lower food costs for her community and promote sustainable agriculture. Beyond her farming ambitions, she is passionate about her art and finds inspiration in the beauty around her. Through her drawings and writings, she seeks to convey her unique perspectives, and share her thoughts and feelings with the world in a way that resonates deeply with others.



HAVANNA FENNER, SENIOR
C.M. RUSSELL HIGH SCHOOL-METS

Havanna Fenner has long known that she wants to work in the medical field. While taking anatomy and physiology, she got to tour hospital facilities and explore various careers, an experiences that cemented her career aspirations. Knowing that higher education was needed to achieve her goals, Havanna followed family recommendations and plans to attend Great Falls College MSU for nursing. Her sister is an alumnus of the program and spoke highly of its structure and benefit as a starting block to a nursing career. Havanna also notes the help she received from her METS advisor, Mrs. Barrett, through support with admissions, financial aid, and college visits. Havanna feels ready for life at Great Falls College MSU and looks forward to increased academic freedom and getting to know her classmates.



ABIGAIL WHEELER, SENIOR

SUPERIOR HIGH SCHOOL-MTGU

Abigail Wheeler has always wondered how her brain works and “what makes [her] and [her] peers think differently.” It was an ongoing quest for answers that led her to enroll at the University of Montana as a Presidential Scholar in the cellular and molecular neuroscience program with a double major in music, focusing on oboe performance. For her, going to college will continue the family tradition of postsecondary education, as both her parents received graduate degrees. Having been raised in a smaller community, she can’t wait for the opportunities ahead of her in Missoula, including the Neuroscience Club and Korean Language and Culture Club. Abigail participated in band all four years of high school, won many music competitions, and played nationwide with some of the highest honor ensembles. Throughout high school, Abigail was inspired by her time with neuro-patients in a clinical environment to pursue her degree. In addition, she maximized MTGU resources to attend educational summer camps, take dual enrollment courses, and prepare for the ACT, earning her a perfect score of 36 on the test.



DAYVANY WHITEMAN RUNS HIM, SENIOR

HARDIN HIGH SCHOOL-MTGU & METS

From an early age, Dayvany Whiteman Runs Him knew where she was going and how she would get there. Starting with a strong sense of self and desire to help others, Dayvany works to be a leader at her school and in her community. Growing up outdoors helped create the person she is today. Whether she was climbing trees, fishing with her dad, or getting hurt while having fun, her relationship with the land has always been important. By choosing to attend Haskell Indian Nations University, she’ll bring back to her community and tribe what she learns seeking a degree in Native American studies. In addition, she wants an opportunity to embrace a new community and opportunities, including walking on to the HINU track and cross country teams. Throughout high school, MTGU has supported Dayvany through college visits, understanding the FAFSA process, sharing scholarship information, and “always having someone on her side-no matter what.” With her family behind her, Dayvany’s role models, including her sister who attends Little Big Horn College have helped her succeed. She’s been able to channel that support and encouragement being elected Hardin High School’s student body president, earning the RISE Positivity and RISE Leadership Awards, receiving the Melvin Gaye Citizenship Award, as well as receiving Academic All-State honors during cross country season. As she gets ready for her next steps, Dayvany has wise advice to students following her—have confidence, push yourself past your comfort zone, and work hard.



AHLEIGHA HANCOCK, 8th GRADE

EAST MIDDLE SCHOOL-METS

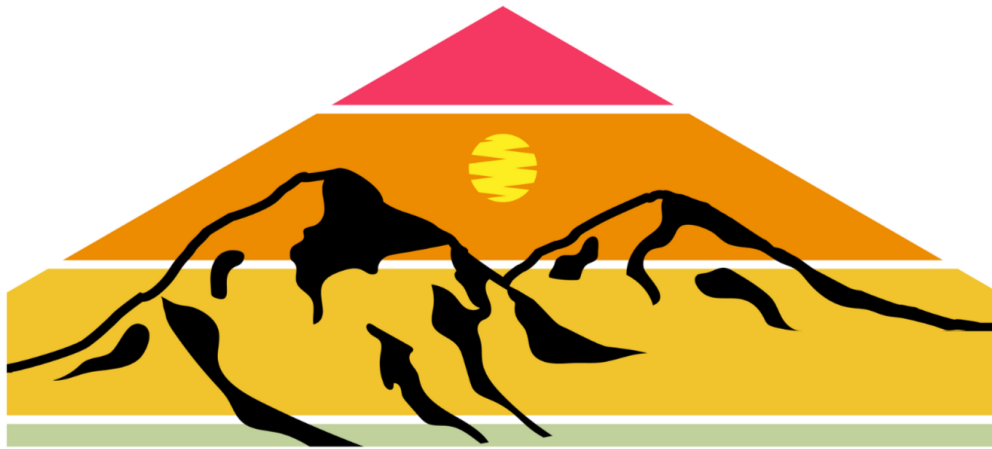
During her time in METS, Ahleigha Hancock has enjoyed the support and kindness of her peers. The program helped shape her perspectives and career goals, and she plans to eventually attend trade school on the way to her dream of underwater welding. She is extremely outgoing and determined in her convictions, which are characteristics she wants future teachers to understand. Ahleigha is excited to participate in sports and take indigenous studies in high school. She’s set on involving herself in as many activities as possible to meet new people, something in which she’s well-practiced. Outside of school, Ahleigha attends youth group and powwows. She enjoys practicing her faith, learning about her culture, and sharing these experiences with others.



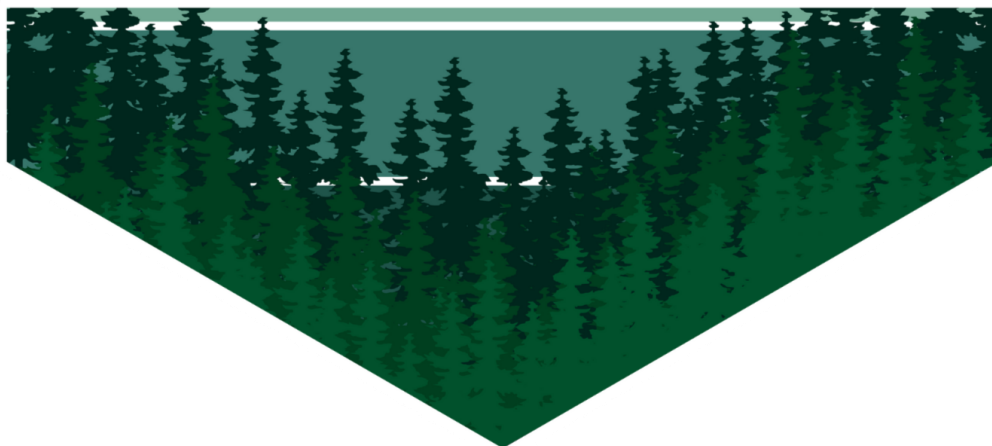
CASH VAUGHN, SENIOR

LIBBY HIGH SCHOOL-MTGU

Even though Cash Vaughn will be enlisting in the Air Force, she knows that computers will be in her future. After receiving her first computer in middle school, along with a passion for gaming, she realized how interesting computer science could be. With a focus on software development, Cash looks forward to her Air Force career in cybersecurity. Cash chose the Air Force “based on what lifestyle I want to have in my future” and an interest in world travel, stable income, and early retirement. While she’ll miss playing in a college band, her love of learning will be satisfied in the military. Beginning in middle school, MTGU has supported Cash in her decision to join the Air Force. In addition, the program has provided opportunities to attend educational summer camps at Montana State University and college visits to the University of Montana.



Bright Futures Class of 2025
Go Find Your Adventure!



Financial Aid Resources

1



Apply Montana

Whether you have already applied for college, are weighing the costs, or wondering whether college is the right path for you, the Montana University System wants to ensure you have the information you need to make the right decision for you.

2

One-Two-Free Dual Enrollment

The One-Two-Free program offers two dual enrollment courses, or up to six credits, through the MUS to all eligible students for FREE. One-Two-Free also allows students who demonstrate hardship to apply for a scholarship to cover tuition for additional dual enrollment courses.



3



Award Montana

Award Montana provides information about Montana University System and state funded scholarships and grants. Unlike loans, these awards are free and do not need to be paid back.

4

Reach Higher Montana

Reach Higher Montana provides a curated list of state, local, and a few national scholarships for Montana students.



5



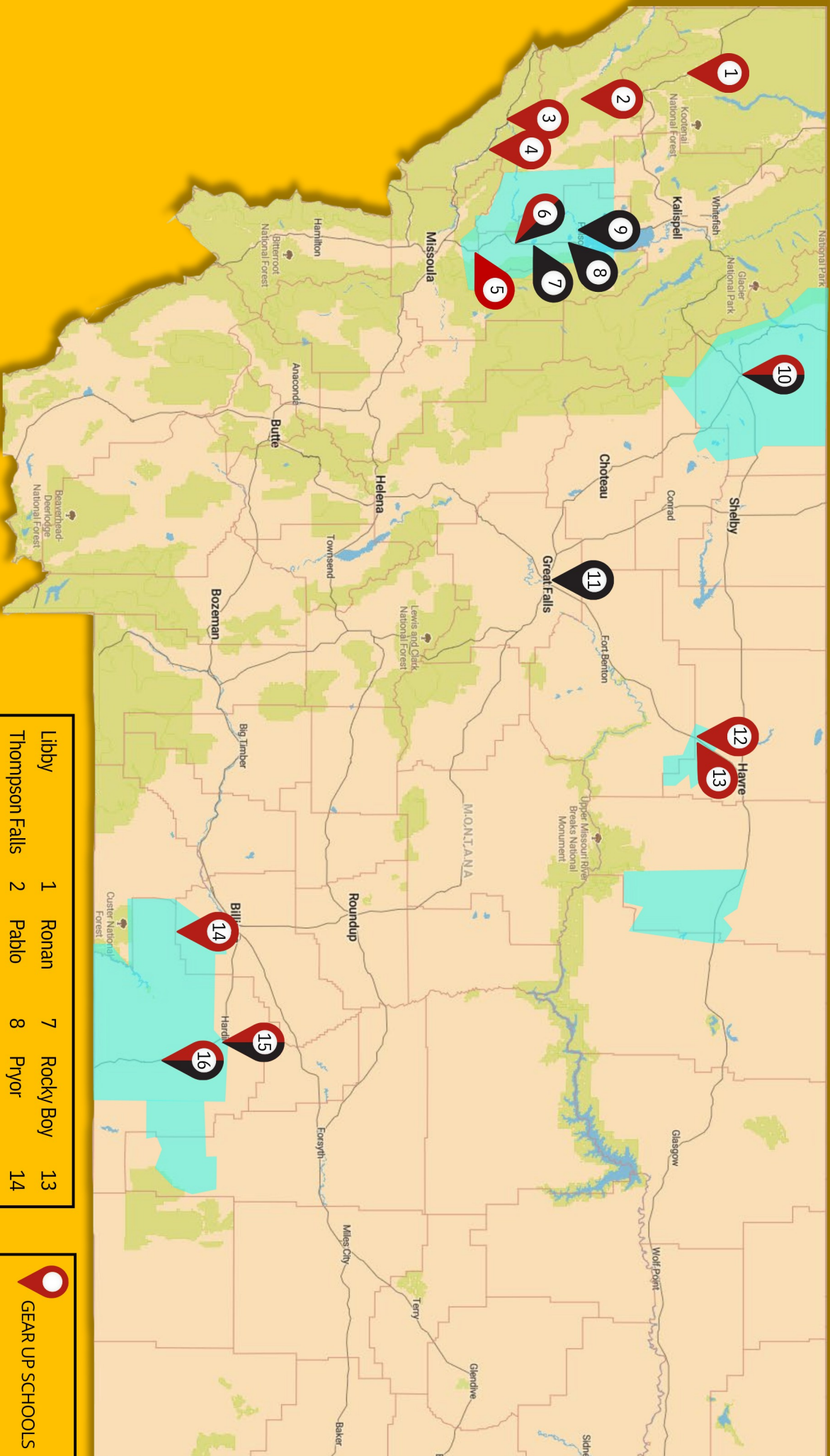
Montana Community Foundation

The Montana Community Foundation Scholarship Directory provides scholarship opportunities for Montana students.

Don't Leave Money On the Table!



MONTANA GEAR UP + MONTANA EDUCATIONAL TALENT SEARCH



Libby	1	Ronan	7	Rocky Boy	13
Thompson Falls	2	Pablo	8	Pryor	14
St. Regis	3	Polson	9	Hardin	15
Superior	4	Browning	10	Lodge Grass	16
Artlee	5	Great Falls	11		
St. Ignatius	6	Box Elder	12		



GEAR UP SCHOOLS



METS SCHOOLS



GEAR UP + METS

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