

THE SUMMIT INDEPENDENT

AN ADVOCACY AND RESOURCE CENTER

FOR MONTANANS WITH DISABILITIES

WESTERN MONTANA DISABILITY NEWS AND VIEWS

SUMMIT INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER, INC. | (406) 728 - 1630 | WWW.SUMMITILC.ORG

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Transportation News & Tips

One of the biggest barriers people with disabilities face is transportation.

Whether someone is going to the store or adventuring around the world, travelling is an important part of life. There can be many ways to get to a destination. We've compiled information on some travel options that will hopefully make your next excursion a little less of a headache.

Para-Transit & Dial-A-Ride

Some cities in western Montana offer services that allow elders and people with disabilities to reserve rides within their area. These programs, called Dial-A-Ride or Para-Transit, can require a medical professional's authorization before people are able to reserve rides but can be important avenues of transportation for people with mobility difficulties. These services are usually run by the same organizations that provide fixed-route bus service in your community.

To find out more about available options, please contact the transit agency in your community.

Kalispell – Eagle Transit – (406) 758 5728
dpolansky@flathead.mt.gov

Ronan – Lake County Council on Aging – (406) 676 2367
coa@ronan.net

Pablo – Salish & Kootenai Tribes – (406) 675 2700 corkys@cskt.org

Libby – Lincoln Country Trans. Service – (406) 293 8024
lcts2ride@yahoo.com

Missoula – Mountain Line – (406) 543 8386
info@mountainline.com

Missoula – Missoula Ravalli Transportation (Vanpools) – (406) 327 8707 mrtma2@montana.com

Hamilton – Bitterroot Bus – (406) 363 7484
spaddock@ravallicoa.org

Hot Springs – Sanders County Transportation – (406) 741 2346
scco@hotsprgs.net

Train

Amtrak has stations that run along the northern part of the state and offers stops throughout the country. In western Montana, Amtrak trains stop in Libby, Whitefish and West Glacier.

Amtrak features accommodations that include providing accessible space-including seats and accessible bedrooms-but limits reservations to one adult passenger with a companion. To learn more about Amtrak accessibility please visit: tickets.amtrak.com/itd/amtrak/ada.

Bus



Rimrock Trailways provides service across the state and links up with Greyhound buses for out-of-state travel at specific stops. Currently, travelers who use wheelchairs can ride any Rimrock route with a 48-hour notice. According to their website, they plan to have all line motorcoaches equipped with lifts by October of 2012. To learn more about Rimrock service please visit: www.rimrocktrailways.com.

When using Greyhound for out-of-state trips, they recommend that passengers with disabilities call 1-800-752-4841 at least 48 hours prior to their departure. To learn more about Greyhound policies, visit www.greyhound.com/en/ticketsandtravel/disabledtravelers.aspx. To book Greyhound trips, visit www.greyhound.com.

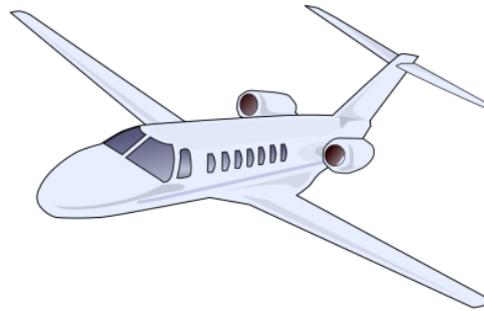
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Airplane



Summit Board

- Leanne Beers
- Sylvia Carollo
- Bob Liston
- Gay Moddrell
- Donell Neiss
- Mary O’Connell
- Larry Riley
- Randy Morigeau



Western Montana features commercial airports in Missoula and Kalispell. Airlines using these airports must follow the guidelines in the Air Carrier Access Act. Among other guidelines, the Act prohibits the following discriminatory practices:

- * Carriers may not refuse transportation to people on the basis of disability. Airlines may exclude anyone from a flight if carrying the person would be harmful to the safety of the flight. If a carrier excludes a person with a disability on safety grounds, the carrier must provide the person a written explanation of the decision.
- * Airlines may not require advance notice that a person with a disability is traveling. Carriers may require up to 48 hours’ advance notice for certain accommodations that require preparation time (e.g., respirator hook-up, transportation of an electric wheelchair on an aircraft with less than 60 seats).
- * Carriers may not limit the number of people with disabilities on a flight.
- * Carriers may not require a person with a disability to travel with an attendant, except in certain limited circumstances specified in the rule. If the person with the disability and the carrier disagree about the need for an attendant, the airline can require the attendant, but cannot charge for the transportation of the attendant.

Also, after several incidents involving passengers with disabilities, the Transportation Security Administration has released a new phone line called “TSA Cares.” TSA officials recommend that travelers call this number 72 hours before leaving home so the agency can coordinate with local airport security. TSA Cares is available weekdays from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. MST by calling (855) 787-2227.

To find out more about transportation options and information, feel free to contact Summit. You can also visit: www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/public_trans.shtml OR www.disability.gov/transportation .

Transportation Task Force Page and TACs

Interested in advocating for better transportation in Montana? Need to find out more about transportation issues and policies?

Check out the Montana Transportation Task Force by calling Shyla Patera at 1(800) 823-6245 or e-mailing her at ncils.patera@bresnan.net . You can also find the Montana Centers for Independent Living Transportation Task Force on Facebook.

Peer Support Project!

Summit is partnering with the Rural Institute and two other CILs to offer peer support services in Ravalli and Lake counties.

This peer support project is for people with physical limitations such as walking, seeing, hearing or talking, who may be experiencing depression, anxiety, frustration or other mental health symptoms.

Peer support means getting together with someone who has been in a similar situation in an informal setting.

Peers can help problem solve, find community resources or just help you to talk through any problems someone may be experiencing.

To learn more, please contact Scott Williamson in Ronan at (406) 676-0190 / scottwilliamson@summitilc.org OR Joel Peden in Hamilton at (406) 363-5242.



The Emerging Leader Showcase was developed through the Rural Institute Transition Projects to help youth, families and schools create a vision for what life in the community

could look like for young adults who have ongoing support needs. An Emerging Leader work group made up of youth with disabilities came up with recruitment ideas, processes for interviewing leaders and capturing their stories, strategies to disseminate information about the project and ways to share information about transition possibilities. We continue to recruit stories of young people with developmental disabilities

who live, play, learn or work in their community. We especially want to hear about youth and families who are self-directing their supports and creatively blending resources. These supports can be organized and managed by a funded adult agency or family and friends. We are also looking for examples of creative funding such as blended services and natural supports, use of SSA work incentives, privately funded services or some sort of traded or bartered supports. If you want to nominate an emerging leader, please download the nomination form from our website at <http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/EmergingLeaders.asp>. You can also join the Listserv or read all of the Emerging Leader stories by visiting our website: www.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition.

Danielle - interview by Ellen Condon

Danielle is 18 years old and a senior in high school. She lives with her mom, stepdad and two dogs in Dillon, Montana. Her newest dog, Abby, is a Cocker Spaniel that she adopted from the Humane Society in Dillon on her first day volunteering there. Her job is to walk dogs down the gravel road next to the shelter. This particular dog was so attentive to Danielle that he stopped, sat down and looked at her every time she stopped. Her support person called her mom and described the dog and the dog's interaction with Danielle. With the understanding that this would be a one-time thing, Abby was adopted the next day and moved into Danielle's house with her and her family.



Danielle and her dog

Danielle is volunteering to gain some work experience, contribute to her community and learn about her skills and abilities with the idea of working once she graduates. Danielle is clear about what she likes. She smiles, vocalizes and greets people she knows when she runs into them at school or in the community. She enjoys the color pink and owns several pairs of wildly colored cowboy boots, although she prefers to carry them on the back of her wheelchair rather than wearing them. Danielle enjoys helping wherever she can. At home she offers to carry in groceries for her mom and at school she is happy to help with sharpening pencils and shredding paper.

The challenge for Danielle's IEP team is to identify places where she can actively participate in work experiences. Danielle uses a motorized chair to get around. She can operate her chair on her own but sometimes support staff cautions her to slow down and watch out for stairs or other uneven spots that might be dangerous to her as her depth perception is impacted by her disability. Danielle is deaf. She understands some sign language but doesn't use it to communicate

with others due to the limited mobility in her arms and hands. She is working on using a Dynovox, a vocal output device with picture icons, to initiate communication. She has two switches that she operates with her feet, one to start the scanning of the computer and one to select the icon she wants. When this isn't quick enough for her she will also get people's attention and point with her foot to let them know what she wants.



Danielle and her horse

Danielle will need someone to help her with the physical components of a job or activity that she cannot physically do. This person could either serve the role of caregiver for Danielle or be her personal assistant or coworker. She relies mostly on her feet to manipulate things and to communicate. She even high fives to greet people with her foot. Her IEP team knows from her first work experiences that she is motivated to help out and be busy. The goals for her next work experience are to increase the tasks she can do, have a predictable routine to allow her to self-direct the tasks, and to increase her overall level of participation on a job. The team is looking for an accessible environment, close to school, that needs stapling, hole punching, shredding, and messages or information shared...basically any task that she can perform using a switch to turn a machine on and off or to relay a message.

While Danielle is still in school she will have a school employee accompany her to a work experience or a job in the community. We don't know at this point if she will need a paid person with her 100% of the time; the more accessible her environment and her materials are the less dependent she will be on someone else. The goal will be to learn more about her support needs through the next work experiences.

Read about Danielle and other Emerging Leaders at:

<http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/EmergingLeaders.asp>

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Ravalli County Update

Come join us for the Summer Solstice Picnic at the Rock Creek Group Picnic Site at Lake Como on June 21 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Admission is a bag of your favorite chips to share with the group.

Watch for upcoming summer recreational activities. There may be an opportunity for a chartered fishing trip to Flathead Lake or a float trip down the Bitterroot River. There has also been some interest in attending a Missoula Osprey baseball game.

We would like to hear from you, so call us at 363-5242 and let us know what your interests are and get your name added to the list for any of the above activities.

Joanne Verwolf, Ravalli County Coordinator



Flathead County Update

Game Night was a great success. If you have not had an opportunity to attend one of our social activities, we encourage you to give it a try! We are sure you will have a great time. Our next event will be on May 12 so watch your mailbox for the invitation. If you are not on the mailing list for social activities, call Flo at 257-0048.

A Working Well with a Disability and a Skills Training Workshop were recently completed. Both classes were well attended and we have a waiting list for future workshops. The next available workshop is Self-Esteem for Women with Disabilities. We will also offer another Living Well with a Disability workshop in the summer, but it has not yet been scheduled. If you are interested in registering for a workshop, please call 257-0048.

Flathead YODA had five participants who were actively involved in Special Olympics this year. On March 4, YODA members supported those who were YODA Special Olympics Athletes at the Special Olympics Parade in Whitefish and watched them get knighted. Two of our participants, Danielle & Kyler, were crowned King and Queen.

Flo Kiewel, Flathead County Coordinator



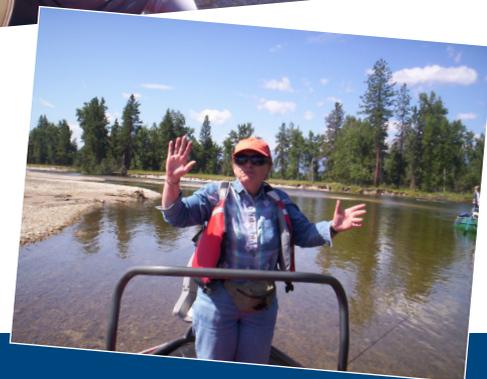
Sanders and Mineral Counties Update

Susan Morris recently had the pleasure of meeting Jackie Burgess, the new director for Sanders County Council on Aging! Jackie and Susan teamed up with Mariah Myton from Western Montana Mental Health, Duane Lutke from Area VI Agency on Aging and Sheryl Weatherell of the foster grandparent program to host an Aging & Disability Resource event at the Hot Springs Senior Center on Wednesday, March 21 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Fifteen people learned about the resources and services our agencies provide in Sanders County. We are planning future events in Plains, Thompson Falls and Noxon.

There has been some interest in having a Self-Esteem class in Hot Springs. Summit is also looking for people from Sanders and Mineral to share community issues, be peer advocates or take part in disability skills, awareness or history classes.

If you are interested in classes, becoming a peer advocate with Summit or if you are aware of an issue that affects the disability community, please contact Susan Morris at the Missoula office 406-728-1630 or 800-398-9002.

Susan Morris, Outreach Specialist



Missoula County Update

30 years of service alongside people with disabilities

Happy Leap Year from Missoula, we hope you did one thing for yourself on this extra day of the year! Here are some of the exciting things we have done or plan to do this year!

Summit Classes: We have just finished the winter sessions of the Living Well and Working Well with a Disability classes. Thank you to Darren Larson, Susan Morris, Cara Wherley and Justyn Field for co-facilitating these trainings. The Women Be Healthy Class is just getting started with Mary Olson and Andrea Dahl as co-facilitators. These classes and others will be offered again in the fall so contact Jude or Kathy at 728-1630 if you are interested.

April is Volunteer Appreciation month: We want to thank our Missoula Senior Companions who meet with folks in their homes and in the community. We offer a shout out to Rose Blick, Karen Bollinger, Mary Montgomery, Eva Warthem, John Weig and Betty Zander.

Peer Advocates: Missoula peers have completed a couple of advanced leadership trainings. Thank you to Mary Olson who coordinates their activities in the schools and Missoula community. Peers who are currently active are Pam Davis, Lynne Kelly, Tom Thompson, Bill Vinner and Cara Wherley.

People First: Buy \$5 coupon booklets from chapter members before April 27-28 for the Community Days sale at Herberger's! April 28 is also the Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast at St. Anthony's Parish Hall, tickets are \$5. Call Andrea at 728-1630 for more information.

Upcoming opportunities: Summit's one hour orientation is the first Friday of every month at 10 a.m. in our conference room - we will hold April's orientation on April 13 instead of April 6 due to holiday.

Emergency Preparedness: Missoula County is offering a three hour workshop at the GuestHouse Inn Conference Center on April 18 from 1-4 p.m. Come and learn more about the Smart911 way to connect during an emergency and what you can do to plan ahead.

Art Social Group: Mike Giddings and Mary Olson are starting a new monthly social group centered on being creative. If you want to know what you can do with your old recycling, just ask Mike what he thinks before you toss it to the wind!

Summer Barbecue: One of the ways Summit wants to celebrate our 30 years of service in Missoula is to host our ever popular potluck barbeque this summer at Bonner Park. Stay tuned!

Jude Monson, Program Manager

Women's Safer and Stronger Program

Summit is now recruiting participants for the Women's Safer and Stronger Program pilot. The program is an online education tool that is designed to help women with disabilities learn to be safer from abuse and to provide them with information about local resources where they can get assistance if they are experiencing abuse. Participants will need to plan to spend 2-3 hours and will be compensated \$30 for their time. Compensation is also available for childcare and transportation expenses. The program is currently available for women in Lake and Missoula counties.

**If you or someone you know may be interested, please contact Susan or Jude at the Missoula Summit office:
1 (800)398-9002 or 728-1630.**

Lake County Update

Here in Lake County, we are getting ready to finish the second quarter at SKC and looking forward to a two-week break. Next quarter, we'll start with a new of Living Well with a Disability class.

Susan Morris from Missoula is gearing up to start the Safer and Stronger research program here. If you know anybody who will be interested in this area, please let her know.

Michelle Williamson, Lake County Co-Coordinator

Summit is funded in part under an agreement with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. Any statements herein do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Department.

Missoula Housing ListHousing Specifically for People with Disabilities

- * Bridge Apartments - 1205 West Broadway, Missoula, MT 59802, 532-9700
- * Bruce Blattner - 1225 West Broadway, 1-800-466-7722
www.accessiblespace.org
- * Eagle Watch - 565 Burton, 1-800-466-7722

Subsidized Housing

- * Cottage Park- 1111 McDonald, 542-2901
- * Council Groves - 1904 S. 3rd St. W, 542-2922
- * Fireweed - 1437 to 1444 S. 1st West, 543-3550 ext. 18
- * Gold Dust Apartments - 330 N. 1st Street, 543-3550 ext. 18
- * Grandview Place - 150 Grandview, 251-3080
- * Joseph's Residence - 2222 Rattlesnake, 549-6159
- * Lenox Flats - 307 Woody, 543-3550 ext. 18
- * Maclay Commons - A New Home for the Joseph Residence
2405 McIntosh Loop, 549-6158
- * Park Apartments - 118 W. Alder, 721-8990
www.professionalproperty.com
- * Parkside Village - 3602 Stephens, 728-7677
- * Phillips Street Apartments - 1805 Phillips, 549-6106
- * Orchard Gardens - 3137 Home Harvest Loop, 543-7368
- * Uptown Apartments - Corner of Woody and Pine, 549-4113
- * Valor House - 2820 Great Northern Loop, 728-1809
- * YWCA Transitional Housing - 1130 W. Broadway, 543-6691

Housing Resource Programs

- * Human Resource Council - 1801 S. Higgins, 728-3710
- * Missoula Housing Authority - 1235 34th St., 549-4113

Property Management Rentals

- * Clyatt Rentals - 101 Pullman Court, 549-4113
- * Creekside Apartment Homes - 1405 E Broadway, 543-9274
www.creeksideapartmentsmissoula.com
- * Crestview Apartments - 4200 Expressway, 327-1212
www.crestviewapts.com/crestview
- * Howard Apartments - 147 W. Main, 541-6468
- * McDonald Rental - 2340 Fairview, 728-5066
- * Riverside Apartments - 2075 Cooper, 239-6483
- * Wolf Glen Apartments - 1825 Wyoming St., 532-9300

Additional Property Management Agencies

- * Caras Management - 401 SW Higgins, 543-9798
- * Fidelity Property Management - 2324 42nd St, 251-4707
- * Garden City Property Management - 422 Madison, 549-6106
- * Gatewest Property Management - 2100 Stephens #110b, 728-7333
- * Grizzly Property Management - 1601 South Ave. West, 542-2060
- * Lambros - 3011 American Way, 532-9200
- * Millenium - 201 W Main, 541-6468
- * Missoula Property Management - 2809 Great Northern Loop,
251-8500
- * Professional Properties - 2685 Palmer St., 721-8990

Tax Credit Housing

- * Butorac Rentals - 1914 Scott St., 549-4113
- * COAD 1 640 RIVER
- * COAD 11 514 RIVER
- * COAD 111 1250 1st St., 549-4113

- * Garden District - 226 South Catlin, 549-4113
- * Palace Apartments - 149 W. Broadway, 542-1660
- * Russell Square Apartments - 1235 34th St., 549-4113
- * Union Place - 2500 Great Northern Ave., 541-4151
- * Wildflower Apartments - 1250 34th St., 721-2113
- * Equinox + Solstice - Russell and Broadway
Managed by Missoula Housing Authority, 549-4113

Housing Specifically for People Age 55+

- * Burlington Square - 2420 Burlington, 327-6659
- * Camelot Apartments - 520 W. Spruce, 542-1765
- * River Ridge Apartments - 2840 Santa Fe Court, 543-7500

Housing for Seniors and Some Accessible Apartments

- * Clark Fork Riverside Manor - 301 West Front, 721-2439
- * Glengarra Place - 3900 Galway Ave., 541-9245
- * Grizzly Peak - 3600 American Way, 721-2292
- * Lynwood Community - 951 Ronald Ave., 728-7333
- * Missoula Manor - 909 W. Central, 728-3210
- * Missoula Silvercrest - 1550 South 2nd West, 541-0464
- * The Springs of Missoula - 3710 American Way, 273-0101
- * Vantage Villa - 1319 E. Broadway, 549-4113
- * Village Senior Residence - 2815 Old Fort Road, 549-1300

Emergency Housing

- * YWCA Gateway Assessment Center - 339 W Broadway, 549-0710
- * Poverello Center - 535 Ryman, 728-1809
- * Shelter Plus Care - 1235 34th Street, 549-4113
- * Ada's Place Emergency Housing - 3530 Brooks St., 543-6691
- * J's House - 1811 South 7th St. West, 543-4055
- * Joseph's Residence - 2222 Rattlesnake, 549-4113
- * La Casa House - 2108 29th St., 543-4055
- * Maclay Commons - 2405 McIntosh Loop, 549-4113
- * Mountain Home - 2606 South Ave. West, 541-4663
- * Salvation Army - 339 W Broadway, 549-0710

Housing Ownership for People with Low Income

- * Habitat for Humanity - 725 West Alder Suite 19, PO Box 7181,
549-8210
- * The Homestart Program - 127 North Higgins, 3rd Floor, Rm 307,
543-3550
- * homeWORD - 127 N. Higgins, 543-3550

For more detailed information about housing opportunities, to submit suggestions or to correct an error, please contact Andrea Dahl at:

(406) 728-1630 or adah@summitilc.org



Summit's new SDPAS Assistant, Betsy Ames, graduated from UM with a degree in social work. She spent nearly 15 years working at UM's Curry Health Center.

Betsy has three grown daughters and one grandson. She enjoys helping her daughter sell baked goods at the farmer's market. Welcome to the team Betsy!

Youth Updates

Building Advocacy and Learning Leadership Skills Update

“Every Day We Juggling”

Do you ever feel like you just have too many balls in the air at one time? Well, here at Summit youth programs we understand this feeling. It seems like every day we’re juggling, juggling BALLS classes that is! In the last two months we have started and finished three different classes: one at Frenchtown High School and two at Big Sky High School. We (Mary Olson, Michael Beers and our much appreciated substitute Cara Wherley) would like to thank all of the teachers for inviting us into their schools. These three classes were some of the finest Ballers to ever go through the course, and we expect great things from all of them in the future.

While we were out in Frenchtown we also got a chance to speak at an assembly for the entire junior class, twice. The first was Mike doing stand up comedy as a way to introduce us and loosen them up. The next week Mary joined the act and we dropped some disability history and culture on ‘em. By all accounts we were a hit; we even had some of our current BALLS students speak up and help with the presentation!



Mike Beers, Youth Coordinator

My Story by Sidney Watson

When I had my car accident, I was sixteen. Looking back on it, I don’t remember what happened or what exactly I was doing in the car: playing with the radio, or talking to someone on the phone. I don’t remember.

The next thing I remembered was learning to walk again and everybody cheering me on to go further. I remember thinking that I was too tired and asking my physical therapist if I could sit down. She just looked at me and said, “No.” She continued cheering with everybody else.

I kept asking myself, “Why? Why do I have to relearn how to do the simplest tasks, such as walking, and my friends just get to come watch?” Sure, they had to go to school the entire day. But I had to stay in Community Medical Center’s rehab unit, 24/7! I didn’t get to go home for dinner, sleep in my own bed or see my pets.

I used to look at my mom at the end of those long days and ask her, “What happened?” When not even twenty minutes before, I asked the same question. The answer was familiar, but I honestly didn’t remember asking the question. Even though it broke my mother’s heart to tell me what happened, she’d say it again.

“You were in a car accident sweetheart. You rolled four times down Hillview.”

Seeing my mom cry made me cry. When her eyes filled up with tears, so did mine. I remember telling her how much I missed my pets, and what I wouldn’t give to sleep in my own bed, and how

YODA: Youth Opening Doors through Advocacy Update

Hello from YODA! We got the New Year started off by giving back.

On January 25, we held a focus group for the representatives of the Playground Project. The Playground Project is a group fundraising and organizing for the construction of an accessible all-abilities playground in Missoula. YODA members gave great input and feedback. The playground equipment that they want to see the most are accessible swingsets. Swingsets were what the members remembered using the most when they were little. We look forward to helping the Playground project again.

On February 22 we watched the documentary Lives Worth Living followed by a discussion of the film. We had a lot of great comments about the movie and also talked about a local advocacy issue we can work on.

A small group of YODAs went to the Griz basketball game on February 23. We had a fabulous time! The Griz won big over Northern Arizona.

Well, that is all from YODA for now. Read up on us next time!



Cara Wherley, Youth Specialist

much I missed rolling on the floor with my dog.

I remember thinking about how I was such a defensive driver. This couldn’t have possibly been me.

Sure enough, the next day my first therapy was speech. The therapist came in with many different types of food and said, “Sidney, today were going to work on eating solid foods.”

She fed me some Jell-O, watched to make sure I chewed it up enough, and let me swallow it.”OK,” she said. “Now let’s try Mac-N-Cheese.” Once again, she fed some to me, watched me chew, and let me swallow.

I look back at those times—three years ago. And I think, “How could I have been so strong?” I hardly had enough energy to get out of bed in the morning, let alone learn to walk again. I honestly don’t see how I had enough strength and energy to do this.

When people hear my story, they say things like: “I couldn’t have been that strong, I don’t see how you did all of that in such a short time period.”

Truth is, I don’t see how I did it either. I try to remember how I managed to have the energy to do this, but I can’t seem to find it. But I did it. I’m here today to tell you about it, and to let you know the dangers of driving. You just have to remember, “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.”

YODA & Holiday Spirit



Some say the most important part of the holidays is sharing kindness.

And when a member of the Youth Opening Doors through Advocacy club saw a news article about Watson Children's Shelter needing gift donations for residents to have a happy holiday, she knew what she had to do.

The member asked fellow YODA'ers at their next meeting if they would help her get gifts for the shelter. And after a vote, the group decided to donate half the club's funds toward getting toys and clothes for the children at the shelter.

The mission was a go.

Members divided into two teams – one to buy presents and the other to deliver them. The first team went to Target and picked out various toys and clothes from the children's wish lists. One YODA member even chipped in her own money to buy additional gifts and some treats so the Watson's children could have their own Christmas party!

The next morning, the second team bundled up and traveled to the shelter to drop off the presents. When they dropped the gifts off, they got a surprise treat of their own! The children at the shelter had made mugs filled with ingredients for hot chocolate and candy canes for people who were donating gifts. The YODA'ers joyfully accepted the Christmas mugs for all their hard work.

After the donation, YODA members went home, but not before adding something to the legacy of youth advocacy in Missoula—holiday spirit.



Social Security Agency: Receiving More Applications Than Ever by Andrea Dahl

Although some people with disabilities have been able to find an employer who is willing to make accommodations for them, many have not. And those people, who either have recently been laid off or have spent a long time looking for a job, often find themselves unable to receive, or continue receiving, unemployment benefits.

Many of those people are turning to Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) for an income source.

Many of the people who apply for SSDI are from the baby boomer generation and have worked for most of their lives. Some applicants are near qualifying for retirement benefits and many have acquired a work-related disability after many years of employment. While remaining at work is preferable, complications from acquiring a disability can become overwhelming; these complications force people into early retirement or into changing careers, which can rapidly use up any savings they may have.

But those who decide to apply for SSDI can become frustrated.

Many attempt it on their own and give up after the first letter of denial, not realizing they are one of many who need to file an appeal. Some will look for an attorney after seeing an ad on TV, but these attorneys are not necessary until later in the process, and can slow your initial progress.

Most applicants will receive a letter of denial after submitting their first application and although the statements are discouraging, it is important to file for an appeal as soon as possible. If someone is denied benefits following an appeal, they can then file for a court hearing.

It is helpful to find someone who knows how to go through the process. Summit can provide assistance in filing for benefits.

Whether someone is filing online or on paper, it is important to include details. Some do not realize the importance of including other health issues. They may be filing because of an injury on the job but if they also have arthritis or asthma, it is important to mention these conditions as well. By providing more details, applicants are drawing a picture to help Social Security get a better understanding of their situation.

Summit can provide free assistance in all four of our offices. We help with initial applications, any paperwork, filing for appeals, and filing for a hearing.

Ask for application assistance from our specialists!

Missoula:	Andrea	1(800) 398-9002
Kalispell:	Flo	1(800) 995-0029
Hamilton:	Joanne	1(800) 398-9013
Ronan:	Michelle	1(866) 230-6936

Social Security Benefits Increase - 2012

Monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits will increase 3.6 percent in 2012 as a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). For some, the Social Security increase may be partially or completely offset by increases in Medicare premiums.

Social Security Disability Thresholds

Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA):	Non-Blind-\$1,010/month	Blind- \$1,690/month
Trial Work Period (TWP):	\$720/month	
SSI Federal Payment Standard:	Individual-\$698/month	Couple-\$1,048/month
SSI Student Income Exclusion:	\$1,700/month	\$6,840/annual

For more COLA information please visit: <http://www.ssa.gov/cola/>
and for Medicare info please visit: <http://www.medicare.gov/cost/>

Newly Constructed, One-Bedroom Accessible Homes: \$550 per month mortgage

The North Missoula Community Development Corporation has drastically reduced the prices of the one-bedroom homes at Burns Street Commons to \$97,500. With only 3 percent down, you could own** a home with a mortgage payment around \$550* a month. This is an unbelievable price for an energy efficient home nestled in the Westside neighborhood.



Burns Street Commons was designed with energy efficiency, comfort and affordability in mind. Each home has energy star windows, super insulation and a 96 percent energy efficient central boiler heating system. Warm hued Marmoleum™ resilient flooring covers the bathroom and kitchen floors and FLOR™ recycled carpet tiles run throughout the remainder of the homes in a classic checked pattern. Kitchens come equipped with Kenmore Refrigerator, Stove and an Energy Star™ dishwasher. Each home has a laundry area with hookups provided, but washer and dryer are not included. Interior colors are soft and inviting with accent walls in the kitchen and master bedroom. All of this is wrapped in a vibrant, modern exterior that pays homage to the surrounding neighborhoods traditional design.

With its Location next to the wheelchair accessible Missoula Community Market and Burns Street Bistro Cafe, residents are just feet away from a grocery store offering a wide selection of local/regional and bulk foods and a deli/restaurant with a yummy and affordable menu.

TO LEARN MORE CONTACT JERRY PETASEK AT 829-8414 OR AT LSP@MONTANA.COM

**This takes into account principle, interest, taxes and insurance with a 4 percent, 30-year mortgage on \$94,000 (amount financed after roughly 3 percent down). Utilities (\$66) and HOA fee (\$25) not included.*

*** You must income qualify to purchase a home at Burns Street Commons. To find out how to income qualify contact Jerry at 829-8414*

BULLETIN BOARD

See our website at:
newsletter.summitilc.org
for more ads

Levo Stand Up Chair

(instruction manual included) for \$2000.00 or offer.
Call (406) 883-9298

Wanted to Buy

Used accessible van for transporting passenger in a wheelchair. Van must be an automatic.
Call David or Patty at 257-8922.

For Sale

Set of ramps for wheelchair/atv's and a sliding bath/shower chair.

Two wheelchairs. One Everest & Jennings Recliner, one Geri-Chair.

1992 Ford Full-size Econoline F-150 w/ Braun wheelchair lift. Automatic. \$4,000 obo.

To learn more about these items, call Tony at (406)546-1570.

Items For Sale

Rubbermaid long transfer bench, adjustable legs, high white back. \$35. Fred Sammons reacher \$3. Call 251-2228.

Stair Lift by ThyssenKrupp Access

A/C Powered, 300 lb lifting capacity, 60' maximum travel, Unit depth: 13 ½" folded, 23 ¾ " unfolded.
Call (406) 961-2403 for more information.

Accessible Home

2 bedroom, 1 bath, opening floor plan, includes wash room, small yard. One level. New roof and siding. Centrally located on a bus route in quiet neighborhood. \$199,000.
Carol Heath - 251-2228 or 529-1679.

Have something you want to sell or give away or are you looking for a hard-to-find piece of equipment?

If so, list it here by contacting Justyn Field at (406) 728-1630 or e-mail jfield@summitilc.org.

Or, list and find those hard-to-find items on the Montech item exchange website at:

<http://montech.ruralinstitute.umn.edu/mtdb/>

ABLE ACT in 112 Congress

The ABLE Act is a bill under review by Congress that would allow for people to save money for goals such as education or housing without losing SSI or Medicaid eligibility.

This bill has 110 co-sponsors in the House and 12 in the Senate, including Montana Sen. Jon Tester.

The following information has been taken from the bill's summary sheet.

Purpose: To encourage and assist individuals and families in saving private funds for the purpose of supporting individuals with disabilities to maintain health, independent, and quality of life.

Qualified Disability Expenses:

1. Education
2. Housing
3. Transportation
4. Employment Support
5. Health Prevention and Wellness
6. Assistive Technology and Personal Support

Federal Treatment of ABLE Account under Supplemental Security Income Program:

When the assets in an ABLE account reach \$100,000, if the beneficiary is receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, any monthly SSI benefits will be placed in suspension.

If the assets in the ABLE account drop back below \$100,000, the SSI benefit suspension ceases and any SSI benefit resumes.

The beneficiary will not have to reapply for SSI benefits once the account drops back below the \$100,000 threshold.

No Impact on Medicaid Eligibility:

Under no circumstance will anyone with an ABLE account who is currently receiving Medicaid benefits lose their benefits – even if their SSI benefits are suspended.

The beneficiary will never lose their eligibility for Medicaid based on the assets held in their ABLE account.

To learn more about the ABLE Act, please visit:

[www.realeconomicimpact.org/
Public-Policy/ABLE-Act.aspx](http://www.realeconomicimpact.org/Public-Policy/ABLE-Act.aspx)



Do you have a disability that started before you were 22 years old?

If so, we invite you to help us with our research study about health and safety and people with developmental disabilities.

The Rural Institute on Disabilities at The University of Montana is doing this study. You may be able to participate if:

- * You are at least 18 years old
- * You have a disability or hearing impairment that started before age 22
- * Your disability makes a difference in how you learn, or understand, or speak, or see, or move, or work, or live on your own without any help.

This study will take place all over Montana. The study is an interview and may take up to two hours. Part of the interview will be on a computer, and someone will be there to help, if needed.

Men and women who are a part of this study will be paid \$40.

If you are in Montana and want to be in the study, or if you have any questions, please contact Kathy Boyer at (406) 728-1630 or 1 (800) 398-9002 / kboyer@summitilc.org .

Sex and disability: It's Not Just Hotdogs and Doughnuts!

by Leanne Beers and Bob Liston

As members of the human community, we all have sexual feelings, needs and desires, regardless of our physical and/or mental abilities. Unfortunately, many people don't recognize that the need for intimacy and sexual expression is part of our humanity, and as a result, many people who live with disabilities do not receive information on relationships and sex.

We must redefine sex and intimacy and how they can be folded into our relationships. Intimacy is much more than the physical aspect of a relationship, and is often the part that we as humans most desire.

We are survivors of life-threatening illnesses, injuries, conditions we were born with, or we may be living with a debilitating chronic condition. Our various personal circumstances come with many physical challenges and emotional responses.

In this new series of articles, we are here to confirm for you new ways to heal, cope, adjust and rediscover what it means to enjoy intimacy and rewarding sexual experiences. Your sexual functioning may have changed, but there are almost always alternate, creative ways to achieve sexual fulfillment and well-being, and the intimacy you desire and deserve. And it's good for you!

The *Sexuality and Access Project* puts it this way: "Sexual rights are human rights, and sexual health is the core component of general health. These are some basic truths that are simple but often simply ignored."

Sex and intimacy are topics that need to be discussed despite the fact that many of us feel uncomfortable talking about them, especially sex. Sex and intimacy are a typical part of life and good health. "It's human nature to desire intimacy and reproduce...these needs are in no way diminished by disability."--*Life on Wheels* book.

MYTHS BE GONE!

Let's start with some myths that need to be dispelled: myths that many people believe about the sexuality of people who live with disabilities.

For instance, one myth says that people with disabilities do not feel the desire to have sex. Another myth says that people with developmental and physical disabilities are unsophisticated and dependent.

So are these myths or facts? Let's take a look.

Are people with disabilities sexual? Absolutely! All people are sexual beings. We as humans, regardless of whether or not we live with a physical, mental or emotional disability, are sexual creatures. We all need affection, love, intimacy, acceptance, and companionship. We also may need reassurance that we can have satisfying sexual and intimate relationships, which we can get through practical education and guidance.

Are people with disabilities unsophisticated and dependent when it comes to sex and intimacy? This idea has come to pass from the notion that a disabled person is somehow unable to participate equally in an intimate relationship. This subject can and will cause severe societal discomfort. This occurs with sexuality in general, it is not just limited to the sexuality of people who live with disabilities. And any lack of sophistication on the part of people living with disabilities is likely due to being overprotected, and deprived of accurate information and the opportunity to ask questions and not be judged. The good news is that information is definitely available, and we hope to share some of that with you.

It bears repeating to again say that regardless of the physical, mental or emotional challenges we may face, we do have very normal feelings, sexual desires and a need for intimacy and closeness. In order to behave in a sexually responsible manner and get our needs met, we need the proper skills, knowledge and support. We need materials and tools that address our personal boundaries and limits, and teach us how to respect the boundaries and limits of others. And finally, we need to know the whole range of possibilities and choices and opportunities available to us so we can make informed and healthy decisions about sex and relationships.

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*AN ADVOCACY AND RESOURCE CENTER FOR
MONTANANS WITH DISABILITIES*

THE SUMMIT INDEPENDENT

APRIL 2012

SUMMIT NEEDS TO KNOW WHAT YOUR NEEDS ARE!

We need to get feedback about the disability experience so we can have a good plan moving forward. We need to hear from people with disabilities and their support (family and friends) in the community. We also need to hear from service providers.

What are you seeing in western Montana in terms of transportation, housing, access and services?

Please go to www.summitilc.org and fill out either the **provider** or the **consumer survey**. And please tell people you know to take the surveys - if we don't hear from you, we won't know what you want!