

The Summit Independent

Western Montana's Disability News and Views



Summit Independent Living Center, Inc. 700 SW Higgins Ave., Suite 101, Missoula, MT 59803

January 2007

60th Montana Legislature ~In Session~

Now that the elections are behind us, it is now time to get down to business with Montana's 60th Legislative Session. This Legislative Session started on January 3, 2007 and will run until April 24, 2007.

This year, the Senate side of the Legislature is controlled by the Democratic Party by a 26 to 24 margin and the House side is controlled by the Republican Party by a 50 to 49 margin with one member of the house being from the Constitution Party.

Despite a shakeup in the House leadership, things are moving full speed ahead and now is the time for you to get involved in the legislative process to let your voice be heard. There are many issues facing this year's Legislature that are very important to the disability community and to our way of life and survival.

A great way to stay informed and up-to-date with the Legislature is to join Summit's Action

Alert System by going to the Action Alert site at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MTILActionAlert/> or contacting Travis Hoffman at 406-728-1630 or email thoffman@summitilc.org and ask to be added to the email list.

Now is the time for your voice to be heard regarding the topics that are important to you. Remember, the Legislature works for you, you don't work for the Legislature. So contact your legislators today and let them know just how you want them to vote and why.

To learn more about the Legislature or to track the work of the Legislature please visit: <http://leg.mt.gov/css/sessions/60th/default.asp>

To send a message to your legislator via the web, please visit: <http://leg.state.mt.us/css/sessions/60th/legwebmessage.asp>

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Summit's Newest Team Member

Hello, my name is Marsha Cummerford and I am the new Summit Secretary in the Missoula office. I am new to the Missoula area and so far I am really enjoying the scenery and the people here in Missoula as well as the surrounding area. My son, daughter, and three granddaughters live here in Missoula as well. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my granddaughters and all of my family. I look forward to working with all of you in my new position and if there is anything I can do for you please feel free to call at 728-1630 anytime.

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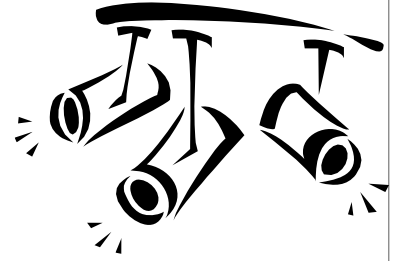
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This newsletter is funded by the U.S. Department of Education grant H132A30808 and in part under an agreement with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. Any statements herein do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the departments.

Spotlight On...



Leanne Beers

Since graduating from Loyola Sacred Heart High School in Missoula in 1991, Leanne enrolled in and became involved in the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) at the capacity of community involvement, public relations, fundraising, activity and event organization, and public and community education statewide in Montana.

Leanne attended college at Gonzaga University and the University of Montana with undergraduate major degree focus on Psychology and Special Education. This double major provided her with coursework, experience, and knowledge in the field of disabilities and public special-education, which qualified her to work in pre-kindergarten programs to conduct evaluations and make assessments before children began school to ensure that they received the most adequate education possible in the least restrictive environment.

While earning her undergraduate degree, she also gained greater knowledge and experience by participating in the following programs:

- A) Easter Seals-she conducted case and chart reviews, participated in formulating Individual Family Specialized Programs, and participated in formulating Individual Education Plans;
- B) CDC-she provided respite care to consumers of CDC, conducted and completed assessments, and fulfilled responsibilities to complete an internship;

- C) she participated in patient and family education, peer counseling, and other duties as assigned at Missoula Community Medical Center's rehabilitation unit to gain further experience in the health-care field.

Upon completion of her degree Leanne taught public school as qualified by her undergraduate degree in Psychology and Special Education. Leanne also became actively involved in many community programs to further increase her employment possibilities and knowledge of community agencies and organizations, and most importantly she did this out of pure compassion.

In 1998 Leanne had her first child Jessica Beers and in 2000 her son Thomas Beers. Along with Leanne her children are also very active in the community. Leanne considers her volunteer work her hobbies and passions. When Leanne is not doing fundraisers she is enjoying life with her children being outside, at the lake or park, or just quiet time watching a movie.

Currently Leanne maintains a busy lifestyle as a single parent yet still finds the time to pursue her post-graduate degree in Health Administration and Public Relations in Health Communication and play an active role on Summit's Board of Directors.

MonTECH Announces Internet Access to Assistive Technology

MonTECH, a program within the Rural Institute on Disabilities at the University of Montana announces a new website to improve access to Assistive Technology (AT) for Montanans with disabilities.

The Equipment Loan program provides individuals with an opportunity to try devices before purchasing them to ensure that the device will meet their need. A large inventory of AT items are listed on the website and are available for a thirty day loan. There is no cost to borrow equipment, but the borrower is responsible for return shipping and package insurance charges.

The Equipment Exchange provides a way to recycle assistive technology, durable medical equipment, and other related items. The service allows individuals or programs to list items for sale, exchange, or give-away so that other individuals or programs can utilize them. Owners of such equipment simply create a login and password in order to list an item. Individuals seeking equipment search the site and contact owners of specific listings to negotiate conditions of the exchange.

MonTECH also continues to provide other AT services. Equipment Demonstrations, professional AT Evaluations,

Trainings and Presentations, Information and Assistance, and a Financial Loan Program for AT purchases are available. MonTECH is also a Microsoft Accessibility Center and provides training and assistance on accessibility features of Microsoft products including the new VISTA operating system.

To learn more about Assistive Technology, and/or MonTECH programs, visit their website at <http://montech.ruralinstitute.umt.edu> or contact the staff by calling 406-243-5751; or 877-243-5511 (toll-free).

Work Incentives Planning and Assistance

In November 2006, North Central Independent Living Services won a grant to provide Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) services throughout the state of Montana. Summit Independent Living Center, along with MILP and LIFTT, will become subcontractors in the grant.

Work incentives assistance involves the delivery of accurate information and direct support for individuals on SSI or SSDI who wish to utilize available work incentives. This may include management of the trial work period, a Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS), use of Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE), or any other employment supports available from Social Security.

Each Independent Living Center will send one or two employees to an intensive week-long training to prepare them for providing WIPA services. Training is expected to take place in January. Each trained work incentives counselor (CWIC) will establish written benefits analysis plans for beneficiaries with disabilities that outline their employment options. These plans will explore long-term supports that may be needed to ensure a beneficiary's success in employment, including the utilization of Medicaid, Medicare or other health insurance coverage. CWICs will also make referrals to Employment Networks or Vocational Rehabilitation when appropriate.

Work Incentives Educational Seminars (WISE) will be pro-

vided to better educate consumers about the availability and use of work incentives to assist them in their return to work efforts. These seminars will be held locally and facilitated by the CWICs at each Independent Living Center. Watch for upcoming announcements about a WISE near you.

The WIPA grant promises to provide consumers with easy access to local counselors providing information on work incentives. If you have questions regarding work incentives, call your local Summit office to be connected with Summit's CWIC.

Ravalli County Update **By Joanne Perkins**

The Valley Veterans Service Center, located in the Human Resource Council Building, 316 N. 3rd Street, Suite 160, Hamilton, is open Monday through Friday to assist any and all veterans. The purpose of the center is to help, foster, encourage and promote aid in the procurement of benefits available to the veteran for services performed for his/her country. There are approximately 5300 veterans in Ravalli County so this is a much needed and valuable resource. They have a National Certified Service Officer on staff as well as a great group of volunteers, so stop in and visit them.

The Montana Department of

Transportation (MDT) has hired LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc., a national transportation consulting firm, to conduct the Five Valleys Regional Transit Study, which includes Ravalli County. The focus of this study will be to identify those intercity bus transportation needs in each area and to develop a service plan for meeting the needs. We are looking for individuals that would like to participate in the stakeholder group and represent the interest of local residents and organizations. If you are interested, please contact Summit at 363-5242.

The Summit peers participated in the annual Daly Elementary

Disability Awareness Day last month and received many letters of thanks from the 3rd graders that attended.

Even though we are experiencing winter now, spring is just around the corner and the Bitterroot Spring Fair is scheduled for March 24, 2007 at the Hamilton Fairgrounds. Summit will be there, so stop in and visit our booth.



Flathead County Update **By Flo Kiewel**

The demand for services by consumers at the Kalispell office continues to be steady. Staff members are excited about the new year as we expect to see changes which will enhance our ability to provide more comprehensive services to consumers.

Flo will be attending training to become a Certified Work Incentives Counselor for the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) grant. This training will allow Summit to assist consumers who would like to go to work and gradually get off Social Security benefits. Flo has already begun providing services under this grant by making use of a job shadowing arrangement. If you have any questions about how work activity will affect your benefits, call

Flo at 257-0048.

The Kalispell Summit office has become a member of the Flathead One-Stop Workforce Center. The Flathead One-Stop is a three tiered system and Summit is a member on two different levels: tier one, which is the Community Management Team and tier two, also called the Vision Team, which will provide support and guidance to the one-stop system.

Peers Carolyn Reich and Lisa Moorhead attended a Community Resource Link Training provided by United Way in December. The Resource Link training provides an overview of many of the human services agencies in Flathead County and the services that they pro-

vide. At this same training, Flo coordinated a panel presentation on disability services by bringing together seven other agencies in a collaborative effort. That was the first time that disability services had been presented by multiple agency representatives. The panel presentation will be provided again in January for the first Flathead One-Stop Workforce Center training.

In December, peer advocates Leo Kanning, Evelyn Pool, Melanie Stoddard, and Lisa Moorhead provided a disability awareness training to the staff of Head Start.

Lake & Sanders County Update By Leon Grant

Things are starting to get busy in Lake County with more and more people coming into the Ronan office for services. Outreach and visiting with other agencies is starting to pay off. Leon Grant was invited to speak to the Kootenai Culture Committee about Summit ILC services this fall at their center in Elmo, Montana. Leon said it was very intimidating to speak to a group of Indian Elders; especially the Kootenai's who have a reputation of being no-nonsense people. Everything turned out all right and after the presentation was over they invited Leon to stay for lunch which he respectfully did.

Lately, it has been slow going for the Lake County Peers as they try to overcome illness and attend

to other time commitments. Starting with the new year they will once again be doing disability awareness presentations at local schools.

The Sanders County Peers have been busy and are involved in a lot of organizations within Sanders County. They are great advocates for their county despite their lack of clientele. For the month of December 2006 and into 2007 we are going to do presentations on Summit ILC services at the Sanders County Senior Centers. According to census data gathered in Sanders County in 2005, 2,169 people that were 21 and over had some type of disability. That is 29.3%, over a quarter, of the total population in Sanders County. We know they are out there we

just need to find a way to reach them.

Our People First chapter had their last party for the year on the 15th of December. Along with Mission Mountain Enterprises, the consumers received presents from the local businesses... After lunch and after everyone opened presents, the famous Mission Mountain Enterprises band provided live music and everyone danced the day away.

From the crew in Lake and Sanders County, Happy New Year!

Missoula County Update By Jude Monson

Welcome to Marsha Cummerford, our Summit Secretary! Marsha had worked with us this summer when we held our Peer Training and Statewide Symposium. She has a friendly manner and will help you understand what services Summit has to offer.

Missoula Staff and Peers have been in the political mode for months! We came away from the Statewide Independent Living Council and Center Symposium enthused about advocating for changes in Montana.

In Missoula Kasey Day and two peers, Sheila and Lynne, began by increasing voter registration within BeeHive Homes. Missoula Valley People First Advisor Andrea Dahl and some of the members were working on

the election drive. Travis Hoffman facilitated the Missoula Candidates Forum along with the Missoula Coalition for Disability Rights members. Since the election Travis has been working with the statewide committee to prepare for the 2007 Legislature.

Travis and the Missoula peers have continued to work on local accessibility needs. Congratulations to Splash Montana and Currents for making your aquatics facilities accessible to people with disabilities!

Lorna Palin continues to manage Summit's self direct personal care services. Lorna and Joanne Perkins, Ravalli County Coordinator, took the Powerful Tools for Caregivers Training. If you are a family member and

provide care to a person with a disability and are interested in this training, call Lorna.

Paul Peterson, a long time Summit employee passed away this fall due to multiple health issues. Paul was a strong Montana advocate for people with disabilities. We will miss his humor and leadership.

You may have heard that Mike Mayer, Summit's Executive Director had a second surgery this fall. He is at home recovering and is telecommuting a few hours each day. Mike's plan is to return to the Summit office in early 2007 with his usual vision and drive.

MTPCAPA

Montana Personal Care Assistance Providers Association

Each and every day in Montana there are hundreds of caregivers going to work to care for consumers in their homes. Behind each and every caregiver is an agency, company, or organization that supports the caregiver in the workplace and in turn the consumer in their home environment. That is what personal care assistance providers do 365 days a year.

In 2006, providers from Montana came together to organize an association so we could work together to provide better services in Montana.

The Montana Personal Care Assistance Providers Association (MTPCAPA) exists to promote communication and education to improve the delivery of home care. Our mission is to come together as a cohesive community of personal care assistance providers to promote the health, safety, and welfare of consumers by

improving the delivery of services in the home setting.

That means that though we may be competitors, when we come together, we bring our experience, knowledge, and issues to work towards solving to solve the problems facing our industry.

We provide a medium where providers can come together and talk about the issues impacting personal care assistance. A few of the issues we are working on are mileage reimbursement, health insurance for caregivers, employee background checks, caregiver recruitment and training.

By 2025 we recognize that Montana's population will be 20% people who are 65 years and older. In some areas association members are already seeing a shortage in

MEDICATION EMERGENCIES WIDESPREAD, OLDER ADULTS AT RISK

Over 700,000 patients are treated in emergency rooms annually for health problems caused by prescription drugs, dietary supplements and over-the-counter medicines, according to a new study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association. According to the report, the majority of medication-related emergency room visits are due to allergic reactions or unintentional overdoses.

Older adults are particularly vulnerable: the study found that individuals aged 65 or older are more than twice as likely to be treated in emergency rooms for

bad reactions to drugs. They are also nearly seven times more likely than younger individuals to require hospitalization.

With use of prescriptions and other medications on the rise, researchers say that increased monitoring and prevention efforts are needed to boost safety, especially for older individuals.

The study's authors found that just three drugs—warfarin (a blood thinner), insulin (for treatment of diabetes) and digoxin (a heart medication)—cause almost one-third of drug

-related emergency room cases among older adults, enabling more focused intervention strategies for that population.

Last month, the Medicare Rights Center released a report that recommended the strengthening of medication therapy management programs under Medicare Part D to enhance patient understanding of and adherence to drug regimens and to prevent medication-related accidents.

MTPCAPA Continued

available workers to meet consumer needs. The average caregiver is 40+ years old.

Health care is big business in Montana. Personal care assistance in the home is only part of the state's service sector economy. Yet we know that when it comes to where consumers want to be when they have



health care needs, we know they prefer to be in their home if at all possible.

So providers come join us. Help us move beyond the issues to new solutions, new beginnings that help all Montanans to live better, longer lives at home. Consumers can contact any member with issues that they would like us to take a look at. Visit our Website: www.mtpcapa.org

Montana Medicaid Infrastructure Grant

Montana's four Independent Living Centers are teaming up to embark on a statewide campaign to talk with people with disabilities about employment. We would like to invite you to share with us your employment experiences as well as your employment goals and worries in order for us to assist the State of Montana to develop a Medicaid infrastructure that supports the competitive employment of people with disabilities.

During this process, we will be holding numerous statewide consumer focus groups and talking one on one with people about what you think are the primary barriers to becoming successfully employed. We also want to know what you think would help people with disabilities attain competitive employment and work towards achieving self-sufficiency.

To participate we only ask that you:

1. identify as having a disability that impacts your ability to live independently or gain employment and have a desire or goal to work part time or full time,
- or
2. are a person with a disability who is already employed.

As a participant, you will receive a \$25 stipend for your time and input.

Thank you for your interest in employment and improving the lives of people with disabilities in the State of Montana. We look forward to talking to you and hearing what you have to say.

For more information, please contact Travis Hoffman at Summit by calling 406-728-1630 or by sending an email to thoffman@summitilc.org.

This project is funded (in part) under a contract with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. The statements herein do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Department.

www.mtpcapa.org
www.mtpcapa.org

HELP WANTED

www.mtpcapa.org
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Missoula County ADA Notice

In accordance with the requirements of title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the County will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability in the County's services, programs, or activities.

Employment: The County does not discriminate on the basis of disability in its hiring or employment practices and complies with all regulations promulgated by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission under title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Effective Communication: The County will generally, upon request, provide appropriate aids and services leading to effective communication for qualified persons with disabilities so they can participate equally in the County's programs, services, and activities, including qualified sign language interpreters, documents in Braille, and other ways of making information and communications accessible to people who have speech, hearing, or vision impairments.

Modifications to Policies and Procedures: The County will make all reasonable modifications to policies and programs to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to enjoy all County programs, services, and activities. For example, individuals with service animals are welcomed in County offices, even where pets are generally prohibited. Anyone who requires an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication, or a modification of policies or procedures to participate in a County program, service, or activity, should contact the appropriate County office at 406-721-5700, as soon as possible but no later than 48 hours before the scheduled event.

The ADA does not require the County to take any action that would fundamentally alter the nature of its programs or services, or impose an undue financial or administrative burden. Complaints that a County program, service, or activity is not accessible to persons with disabilities should be directed to Ann Mary Dussault, ADA Coordinator.

The County will not place a surcharge on a particular individual with a disability or any group of individuals with disabilities to cover the cost of providing auxiliary aids/services or reasonable modifications of policy, such as retrieving items from locations that are open to the public but are not accessible to persons who use wheelchairs.

More on the Legislature

Save the Date:

- ◆ The Department of Public Health and Human Services Disability Services Division public testimony hearing at the Legislature is scheduled for 10:00am - noon on January 18.
- ◆ The Statewide Independent Living Council and Montana's four Independent Living Centers will be hosting a Legislative Day lunch feed on January 23 in the Capitol Rotunda.

We will not have a Lobbyist in Helena during this

Legislative Session to be there advocating for our issues. Instead, we will largely be focusing on developing a major grassroots effort to get consumers and peers over to Helena on a regular basis to ensure that our presence is felt and our issues are not pushed aside.

This is where we need your help! The only way we will get our issues through the Legislature and improve the lives of people with disabilities is if we speak up and let our voices be heard.

West Broadway Charette Update

The City of Missoula in conjunction with Missoula County and the State of Montana are currently hosting a series of meetings to draw up all new plans for the West Broadway Corridor in Missoula. The West Broadway Corridor consists of Broadway Street from about Mullan Road all the way East to Orange Street.

The first Charette meeting was held on October 24, 2006 at the Missoula Children's Theatre. During this first meeting the engineering firm took public comment on the pros and cons of the existing configuration of the West Broadway Corridor. Various staff members and peers were in attendance to offer their input.

The second meeting of the Charette took place



on November 16, 2006 at the Inn on Broadway. This meeting offered the public an opportunity to get into small groups and brainstorm different ideas for how the Corridor should look and function. Each of the small groups then presented their ideas to the group.

The next round of public meetings for this Charette will be held on the nights of January 17 and 18 at the Broadway Building on the St. Patrick's Hospital campus from 6:00pm - 9:00pm each night if you are interested in attending.

If you have any questions, please contact Travis Hoffman at 4506-728-1630.

BULLETIN BOARD

See our website at www.summitilc.org for more ads

- ◆ **Accessible Van**, 99 Ford Econoline 3/4 ton, Crow River tri-fold lift, raised roof & lowered floor, passenger side lockdown, good condition, 115K miles, \$15,500. Call 406-626-1917
- ◆ **Three Wheel Rascal**. Used only a few times, like new. Upholstered seat with armrests. Very Comfortable. Easily breaks down for loading, or use the ramp that comes with it. Two batteries included. \$4,000 OBO. Must Sell. Call 837-3341.
- ◆ **3-wheel Power Scooter**. Like new, less than one year old. \$1400. 728-9159.
- ◆ **1998 Invacare** Ranger X-storm series power wheelchair. In good conditions. Power reclining leg and back. Comes with battery charger, needs new battery. \$2,500 or best offer. 543-9355.
- ◆ **2005 Jazzy** 1103 Ultra Power Wheelchair. Paid \$12,000 asking \$6,000. Call 721-0671
- ◆ **Free**: Hospital bed. Call 728-2781
- ◆ **Vanguard** Model VG communication device. Touch screen w/ several pages of icons and a speaker. Make an offer. (406) 257-7433
- ◆ **1992 Ford Econoline** Van with a 2002 side entry Braun Vangator wheelchair lift raised roof and doors, and Surlok retractors Very Good condition! Call 541-2929
- ◆ **Free**: 1990's era working wheelchair lift in a Ford Aerostar van. Call Bill 406-444-5340
- ◆ **Quickie V121** power wheelchair. Black, battery cases, headrest, oxygen tank holder, backpack. Rarely used. \$1,000 OBO. 406-531-7662 or 406-543-4521
- ◆ **Crow River** wheelchair lift for van. 750 lb weight limit. \$2,000 OBO. 406-258-5172

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Youth Corner By Mike Beers

Hello, and welcome to the Youth Corner, Summit's newest addition to the newsletter. This section will allow you to meet and get to know some of the youth that are involved with Summit and the Independent Living Movement.

So allow me to introduce myself, my name is Michael Beers. I have been a Peer Advocate at Summit ILC for about four years now, I'm an Aries, I enjoy long walks, acronyms, and MNF (Monday Night Football). I got involved at Summit after first attending the Montana Youth Leadership Forum in 2001, a one week leadership training for high school students with disabilities.

I do a variety of things as a Peer Advocate and my role continues to change and grow as my experience and Independent Living IQ grow. Currently I am working with Travis Hoffman (your friendly neighborhood Advocacy Specialist) to formalize the curriculum for the class we have been teaching to High School guys for the last two years. Building Advocacy and Learning Leadership Skills, that's right ladies and gentleman the class is called BALLS and if that weren't enough the class motto is Grow a Pair! Of course this is a metaphor for the attitude and self confidence one must have to make it

through high school and achieve your goals once you graduate. The class itself has evolved over the years as well, it began as a training Jude Monson taught by herself called RAVE (Respect Attitudes Values and Education), into two separate classes for boys and girls, and finally into what we are working on now, one curriculum for all.

Summit it's continuously reaching out to youth and seeking youth input, not just on youth issues but on all issues and services that they deal with and provide. To better facilitate this input YODA (Youth Opening Doors to Advocacy) was created, by far Jude's favorite acronym to date. YODA is made up of youth from Missoula and the surrounding areas, many of which are also MYLF alumni.

Well I better be going I'm sure Jude is coming up with new and exciting things for me to do as we speak. Thank you for joining me for this inaugural addition of Summit's Youth Corner. Peace, Love and Grow a Pair!!