

The Summit Independent

Western Montana's Disability News and Views



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

July 2007

The Road to Freedom Rolls Through Missoula

Well let's see, Mayor Engen was there, Commissioner Curtis was there, National leader Jim Ward was there, Nationally acclaimed photographer Tom Olin was there, roughly 1,000-1,500 Missoulianites with and without disabilities were there, even the huge RV covered in pictures and the Road Tour's logo was there. Seems like everyone was there, oh wait, except for the Media, that's right. Or all of the Media except one reporter from KPAX who, unfortunately, still have not aired their footage. Apparently dog shows and Griz athletics are more important to the Media than the lives and civil rights of roughly 50 million American's with disabilities and 14% of Missoula County's population.

No matter about being snubbed by the media though, the Road to Freedom Tour still rolled through Missoula on it's non-stop, attention-grabbing, year-long tour of America's 50 states.

The Road Tour's stop here in Missoula was

nothing short of a success. Around 100-150 people with disabilities, in addition to the 1,000 or so others, turned out at Downtown ToNight on June 28th to catch a glimpse of the Road Tour's spectacular RV, to celebrate nearly 17 years the American's with Disabilities Act, and to help promote Freedom, Inclusion, and Opportunity for all people in all aspects of society.

Mayor Engen and Commissioner Curtis kicked things off by proclaiming June 28th to be "ADA Road to Freedom Day" in Missoula. They were followed by Jim Ward who told about the history of the disability movement and the purpose behind the Road to Freedom Tour. Then the audience was treated to live music and performances by the Same Difference Inclusive Theatre Company.

Thanks to everyone who had a hand in making this event a success, it could not have been done without you.

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Summit Seeks Board Members

Summit is actively recruiting new members for its Board of Directors. The majority of board membership is comprised of individuals with disabilities. We are looking for consumer representatives who are strong advocates for independent living, as well as persons with experience in disability services, marketing, management, accounting or other professional services. These are volunteer positions that require participation in five or six board meetings each year plus some committee work between meetings. Individuals interested in applying should contact Executive Director Mike Mayer at mmayer@summitilc.org or call 721-5118 (home phone).

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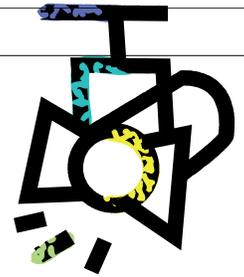
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Spotlight On...



Jason Freytag — Summit Peer Advocate

When I first moved to Montana I was diagnosed as having a mental disability, which came as quite a surprise for me because I had been attending junior college in Idaho. This disability had been a dysfunction I had been born with so it explained a lot of the difficulties I had in life.

Soon after I moved to Montana I decided to take up residence in Missoula. Some people made the suggestion that I apply for a job at Opportunity Resources. They are an organization that employs disabled individuals. To say the least I was somewhat bitter because I never envisioned working at a place like Opportunity Resources when I grew up. I made up my mind however that I was going to put in one-hundred percent; life always gives us what we put into it. I did things like work a lot in Production and Assembly Division as well as the Woodshop. The crew also set up Out to Lunch among other things I was named the company's employee of the year for 2000.

It turns out working there was just a stepping stone. They do have programs that help one find employment in the community. They helped me, by giving me rides, preparing me for personal interviews, etc. to find a place that would employ me.

I was then recruited to be a peer advocate with Summit. SILC and the retreats were some of the conferences that were of interest to me. Going to Helena for Legislative Day and advocating for different disability related bills is also enjoyable for me.

I now work at the Broadway Safeway grocery store I have been employed there for almost seven years now. I have received numerous awards and my boss tells me I am one of the best employees he has. Customer service is always my number one priority and my supervisor has me train new employees as well. I must admit I never envisioned myself working as a bag-boy at a grocery store when I grew up but after truly loving it I can't imagine the thought of doing anything else.

Kerry Myers—WOW!

Assistive Technology Corner

Our goal is to give information and feedback from Assistive Technology Users in Montana. What they like, don't like and what really works for them.

Kerry Myers is the perfect guy to tell about how assistive technology can be so important for getting through the day. Kerry is a 46 year old who lives in Missoula in his own home. He sustained a spinal cord injury many years ago and has high quad-

riplegia –meaning that his available movement is moving his head and neck. Kerry talks a blue streak so communication is his strength! Kerry is a self described hermit when the weather is bad so he wanted technology that could be used from his bed or his wheelchair. Hiding from the clouds is a full time job in Missoula!

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Kerry Myers—WOW! *Continued*

Kerry was easily able to identify goals for his assistive technology. He wanted to be able to communicate with others, have opportunities to be creative, manage his entertainment and his home all with his voice or his available head movements. He knew what his strengths were: he has a good and steady voice, he has consistent head movement, and he has great care providers and a good safe place to use a computer. His greatest challenge, like most folks, was that the technology needed to be reasonably priced and reliable.

So what does Kerry use and how much can he do himself?

Kerry has successfully used an Ameriphone Dialogue phone first supplied through the Montana Telecommunications Access Program (MTAP). It is a simple to program phone that allows for someone to answer the phone using a switch (of any kind) or their voice. It also allows him to have 20 memorized phone numbers that can be dialed through the use of one switch. Kerry's switch is often placed on his chest so he can tuck his chin and away he goes. Initial phone was free as Kerry qualified for the MTAP program. For more information, go to: www.montanarelay.org or call 1-800-833-8503.

Kerry's Gateway computer is where the rest happens. Kerry found some of his assistive technology through some guidance/trial at MONTECH and from some great independent searching on his own. To efficiently run his computer and make choices/selections, Kerry uses a system called Tracker (Madentec). It is an infrared mouse with camera that reads a little silver dot on his face. It is easy to set up and very reliable. Kerry qualified for this technology when he was working with Montana Vocational Rehabilitation and attending the University of Montana. It works for all computer access issues for Kerry. When I arrived to visit with Kerry, he was finishing designing a cabinet to hold his computer using his "Paint" program. It was a professional job! The software called Magic Cursor helps make the "clicking" really easy and fine tuned. For long text, Kerry uses

an older version of Dragon Naturally Speaking where the computer types what he speaks in to a microphone.

What was fun to see was Kerry's use of an inexpensive software program called Active Home. It is an inexpensive option for home environmental controls. Kerry found this on the internet and shared the web site: www.x-10.com Look for the information on the right hand side called "Active Home". With this program and a simple movement of his head, he turns his fan on/off, his air purifier and could operate many more things as he chooses Kerry states it was very easy to program and the software is downloaded via a USB cable.

Kerry then shows how he watches the television from his computer using the Media Center on the yahoo website. He can record shows from the Media Center, change channels, change the volume etc. He can also pre-program many radio stations from his computer. He also relies on the Yahoo instant messenger to alert him to who is calling on his phone.

These technologies are not at all the newest available. What was so fantastic was how Kerry brings them all together to make his day to day life, whether in his wheelchair or his bed, much easier to much more fun. His goals are met but that doesn't keep him from trying new technology when available. Kerry's advice might include:

If you use voice recognition, a good quality microphone is essential!

Be patient when learning the technology.

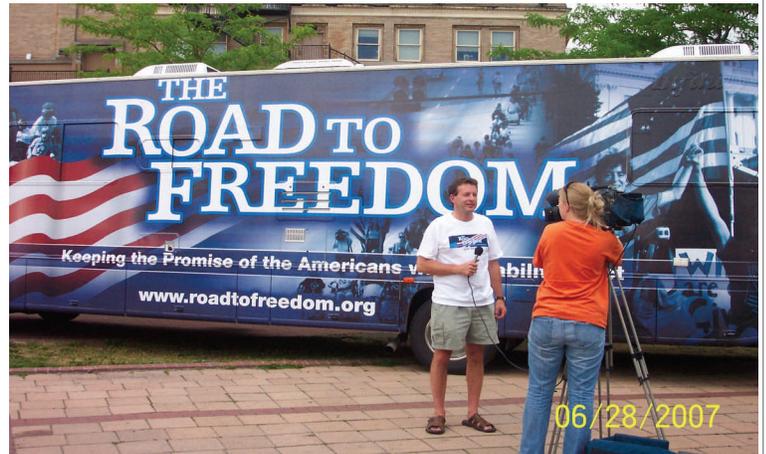
You will be amazed what you find when you look yourself.

Kerry's funding for his technology is a mix which works well: private pay, use of Medicaid spend down, Home and Community Based Services, MTAP and Vocational Rehabilitation. Sometimes, it takes a little from many groups. If you want to email Kerry with questions or thoughts, you can contact him at: yyivuz@yahoo.com



(Above) Summit ILC Executive Director, Mike Mayer, working the Summit Information table during the Road to Freedom event on June 28th at Caras Park during Downtown ToNight in Missoula. The Road to Freedom Bus can be seen parked in the background.

(Below) ADA Watch President and Founder Jim Ward talks with a KPAX reporter during the Road to Freedom event on June 28th at Caras Park during Downtown ToNight in Missoula. Jim, who is also the Founder of the National Coalition for Disability Rights, along with his wife Deb and their two young children and Tom Olin, are traveling the nation on this year long road tour.



Youth Corner By Michael Beers

A fairly recent cultural phenomenon is the advent of the "Wannabee."

What is a Wannabee you ask? The dictionary defines it as a noun for one who imitates behaviors, customs or dress of an admired person or group.

The Wannabee is an unforeseen by product of the civil rights movement, where members of the Majority attempt to imitate members of various minority groups. This trend is most often seen in the hordes of upper middle class white youth who wear baggy pants and cornrows in their hair in an attempt to emulate their favorite Rapper. Others examples of Wannabees include Boy Scouts; who for years have strived to imitate various Native

American cultures. I have also been witness to line dancing-Wrangler sporting-ten gallon hat wearing cowboys who have never even seen a cow. And while most groups of Wannabees tend to be gross generalizations of a whole group, it seems inevitable that for every minority group or culture, a subgroup of Wannabees does exist.

So what about people with disabilities? People with disabilities are the largest minority group in the country, with our own history, culture and movement, all of which begs the question: Where are our Wannabees? To answer this question I present to you the Extreme sport athlete. A group of Athletes who among other things, race down the steepest

mountains, jump out of airplanes 20,000 feet off the ground, skateboard grind on rails, purposely flip bikes over high jumps, and drink unhealthy amounts of Mountain Dew and Red Bull. As talented and entertaining as these Athletes are, it is obvious to anyone that watches them that they are actively pursuing a disability of their own, thus, making them our Wannabees. That's right Butte's own Evel Knievel wasn't just a motorcyclist he was a pioneer in disability Wannabeeism. And while I do not wish harm upon anyone; I say welcome and thank you for the compliment.

Come on into Summit and grab a brochure, we'll be seeing you soon.

2007 Legislative Outcomes

Despite the frustration that was caused by this year's Legislative Session and subsequent special session, all in all it turned out to be a pretty successful year for people with disabilities and those with long-term care needs. The following is a list of Legislative outcomes:

Home and Community-Based Services expansion of 102 additional waiver service slots over the biennium

Provider rate increases at the 2.5% level in each year of the biennium for Medicaid programs and approximately 19% for aging services effective July 1, 2007

Direct care worker wage increases in all programs to bring up lowest paid workers to \$8.50

and then additional funds to bring up wages for all direct care workers by approximately \$.70 in wages and benefits

Funding for health care for healthcare workers targeted at providing provider rate increases to providers for in-home service workers in programs that receive the majority of their income for those services from a Medicaid program. Targeted at workers who work approximately 30 hours or more per week. Funding begins January 1, 2009 To conduct a study on the feasibility of providing healthcare insurance to Medicaid health-care workers.

Resource facilitation services funding of \$100,000 for dramatic brain injury focused on

education and services in second year of the biennium.

A \$50 reduction in the Medicaid spend down for SSDI recipients effective August 1, 2007 followed by another \$50 reduction in 2008.

Additional FTE were also added in the senior long-term-care division:

- 1.5 FTE field staff social workers for adult protective services,
- 1 FTP for SHIP assistance with Medicare programs and part D.,
- 1 FTE state ombudsman resource for advocacy for seniors,
- 5.2 FTE at Montana veterans home

Missoula County Update

Living Well with a Disability

Living Well is a class that offers developing skills with goal setting, problem solving, communication, seeking information and more! Five participants just completed the Living Well with a Disability class through Summit in the Missoula office.

We are also proud of our Missoula staff Andrea Dahl and Mary O'Connell, who have just completed the facilitation training. If you are interested in taking classes in September at our Missoula office please contact Mary O'Connell at 728-1630.

Peer Advocates: Congrats!

Congratulations to Brooke Jaqueth and Dustin Hankinson who have worked as peer advocates with Summit for over 5 years. A huge thank you to Karen Bailey who has been a peer advocate for over 20 year! A huge thank you for all your advocacy work!

Summit ILC SDPAS

Summit ILC SDPAS program is pleased to announce that we have developed a safety program to increase worker safety and reduce workplace injuries. Workman's comp

rates for attendants have doubled in the last year. Summit SDPAS program's goal is to obtain the lowest possible industrial accident rate so that Summit ILC can offer the highest rate of pay for their employees. The safety program will begin on July 1, 2007 and consumers currently on the program will have the safety module at their 180 day review. Any new consumer coming on services will have a safety training done within 2 weeks of starting services. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Lorna at the Missoula office (406) 728-1630.

Ravalli County Update By Joanne Verwolf

The Ravalli County office is kept busy on a daily basis serving a number of consumers, attending to the needs of walk-ins, providing information, networking with other agencies, advocating for needed resources, etc. We are busy, yet we are never alone. I commend each and every one of you who testified during the Legislative Session, as it is your voice that speaks the loudest and has generated additional services within DPHHS. Thank you for being a team player and letting your voice be heard.

Bitterroot Valley People First have decided to take advantage of a grant available through the Rural Institute to either create or improve an accessible recreational spot. The Ravalli Peer Advocates have been advocating for an accessible fishing access, so they plan to work jointly with the peers, the Bitterroot National Forest, the local Kiwanis Club, and local builders to try to make it happen. People First has participated in many activities, with the latest being the Kiwanis Fishing Derby and are now looking forward to the next

event... the Road to Freedom Tour at Caras Park in Missoula.

In Ravalli, we are celebrating Joan Marie Connor's 20th anniversary and Susan Butchart's 5th anniversary as peer advocates. We congratulate them and truly appreciate their commitment and support throughout their years of service.

Here's wishing you all a wonderful summer.

Joanne Verwolf
Ravalli County Coordinator

Missoula County Caregiver Conference

The 19th annual Missoula County Caregiver Conference was held in Missoula on May 24, 2007. This year's theme was "planting the seed"; the committee did a great job of

making the conference room look very springy. 93 caregivers and senior companions attended this year. This is an annual event held in the spring and is open to any paid, non-

paid, family caregiver. Thank you to all of our sponsors and donators to make this a successful conference.



Flathead County Update By Flo Kiewel

Congratulations to Evelyn Pool and Leo Kanning who are both celebrating 20 years as Peer Advocates with Summit. They were our original Peer Advocates when Summit first began providing services in Flathead County. We appreciate their continued support and participation. Congratulations also go to County Coordinator, Flo Kiewel, who is celebrating 5 years as a staff member after

previously serving 15 years as a Peer Advocate. The peer program continues to be an important part of Summit services in the Flathead.

Peer Advocates Diane Carrell, Evelyn Pool and Carolyn Reich completed facilitator training for Living Well With a Disability in May. An on-line ADA accessibility training was attended by Diane and Caro-

lyn as well as Peer Advocate in-training Andy Creighton.

Flo continues to be available to provide assistance with Work Incentives Planning and Assistance. If you are working, or thinking about working, and receive Social Security disability or SSI, you can call Flo with any questions you may have about your benefits.

Ninth Annual CSB Conference

The Ninth Annual Community Services Bureau Conference will be held in Missoula this year on September 26, 27 and 28. Connections brings together Montana nurses, social workers, consumers who are elderly and disabled, provider agencies, and direct care staff for three days of sessions designed to foster connections that improve the quality of life and services for people living with disabilities in the community.

Every year the CSB offers scholarships to consumers and direct care workers. To receive an application, contact your local provider or Abby Hulme, SLTC program manager at (406) 444-4564. This is also an opportunity for providers and organizations to sponsor a vendor table or sponsorship; this enables organizations to get their information out to several hundred people. If you are interested in a sponsorship, you can call Abby Hulme.

The CSB conference is also a time to recognize outstanding services and people who have made a difference. There are several awards given out and anyone can nominate for these awards. Call Amy Gentry, RPO at (406)329-1312 or Abby Hulme at (406)444-4564 for more information and nomination forms. We encourage nominations from all over the state. Hope to see you there!

Recreational Assistive Technology

With the appearance of more sunshine and warmer weather, many of us find ourselves enjoying outdoor leisure and recreational activities. For individuals living with disabilities, desire to recreate is no different than that of our non-disabled peers. Although disability-related barriers may eliminate participation in some activities, similar assistive technology (AT) to that which offers educational and employment solutions can provide a means of overcoming obstacles to enjoying an active lifestyle.

Regardless of an individual's chosen leisure or recreational activities, there are many benefits to individuals with disabilities. Research shows that experiencing recreational activities facilitates feelings of

control over the environment and provides opportunities frequently limited by disability. Likewise, successful leisure and recreational activities result in increased empowerment, which improves one's self-concept and approach to accomplishing tasks independently. As one would expect, participation in leisure and recreational activities also provides excellent opportunities for the expansion of social domains and increased participation in society.

MonTECH, the statewide AT program located at the University of Montana, offers a wide variety of recreational AT devices through our online Equipment Loan program.

Equipment available for loan includes board games, dice, and card game adaptations;

devices for gardening, knitting, crocheting, and darning; sporting equipment for golfing, fishing, hunting, and outdoor navigation; and a wide variety of adapted switches to control mechanisms such as cameras and other electronic equipment.

In addition to a program to provide AT devices for loan, MonTECH staff members are able and willing to help you find AT solutions to your particular recreational desires. We encourage you to contact MonTECH to explore recreational AT.

To see equipment currently available for loan, go to montech.ruralinstitute.umt.edu or call 406-243-2426 or 877-243-5511.

Montana Medicaid Infrastructure Grant

Would you like to make an easy \$25? If so, please contact us and we can then arrange a time to get together and talk.

Montana's four Independent Living Centers are teaming up to conduct 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. This information will allow 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 employment. 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.

If you are interested, please contact Travis Hoffman at (800) 398-9002, (406) 728-1630, or email thoffman@summitilc.org for more information.

LAST CHANCE!

Deadline to Participate is
July 31st

Working Well with a Disability

The Rural Institute on Disabilities is developing a new program titled "Working Well with a Disability". Travis Hoffman and Andrea Dahl participated in the pilot program. The focus is to help the consumer prepare for and to keep employment through a healthier lifestyle. The class discusses setting goals that will help in balancing out the physical, emotional, in-

tellectual, social and spiritual aspects of life. The first four classes focus on goal setting, problem solving, healthy reactions and stress management. Then it goes into resources for information seeking, communications, physical activity and nutrition. It closes with a session on maintenance. The participants were asked for their input on each class to help in

the development of the program to better fit the needs of consumers who are considering employment.





(Above) Michael Regnier (L) and Mark Boatman (R) look on as speakers commemorate the American with Disabilities Act and the Road to Freedom Tour on June 28th at Caras Park during Downtown ToNight in Missoula.

(Right) Todd Tibbets (L) and Laurie Jerin (R) hang out in front of one of nine information display panels that outline the history of the disability rights movement during the Road to Freedom event on June 28th at Caras Park during Downtown ToNight in Missoula. The display panels are part of the traveling Road to Freedom Tour.



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
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- ◆ **3-wheel Power Scooter**. Like new, less than one year old. \$1400. 728-9159.
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- ◆ **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
- ◆ **2005 Buick LeSabre** w/ passenger disability seat. Seat turns and slides out for better access. 13,000 miles. Excellent condition. Reduced to \$20,000. Call 406-728-2642
- ◆ **Quantum 1107** power wheelchair. Brand new, never used. Paid \$6200 for it, will sell for \$2500. Call 406-728-2642.

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APRIL in October!!



The Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) is holding its 13th annual conference in Missoula October 6-8 at the Hilton Garden Inn Conference Center with a Youth Pre-conference on October 5th. This year's conference theme is "From Rural Roots – The Sky's the Limit!" We hope you will consider coming together with rural independent living advocates from across the country at this educational and fun-filled conference here in Missoula.

APRIL is dedicated to promoting leadership and resources for rural independent living. As a national membership organization, APRIL is dedicated to advancing the rights and responsibilities of people with disabilities in rural America by serving as a center of resources and by leading systems change. APRIL was founded in 1986 by twelve directors of rural CIL's who met in Houston, Texas. Mike Mayer, Executive

Director of Summit ILC, was one of the organization's early members and served as president from 1991 through 1996. APRIL's initial meeting in 1986 was sponsored by the Independent Living Research Utilization (ILRU) in Houston. Some of APRIL's ongoing national achievements include establishment of a CIL peer-to-peer mentoring program, a rural transportation voucher program, and ongoing training and technical assistance, including the annual national conference on rural independent living.

If you are interested in learning more about APRIL or attending the upcoming conference in Missoula you can go to the APRIL website www.april-rural.org or call 330-678-7648.

