Our Lives, Our Homes, Our Communities Rally
Montana’s Centers for Independent Living teamed up with legislators, consumers, and other human services advocates to protest draconian budget cuts made by the 2011 Legislature.

Statewide Independent Living Legislative Day A Success
January 20th was an exciting day to be at the Capitol! The Statewide Independent Living Council and Montana’s four Centers for Independent Living (Summit, NCILS, MILP, and LIFFT) sponsored this year’s Legislative Day event during the 2011 Legislative Session, which was held in the Capitol Rotunda. Approximately 100 people participated in Legislative Day this year, traveling to Helena with one of the four independent living centers.

In the morning, a workshop was held to present various strategies for lobbying legislators as well as how to best convey our message to them. Two former legislators, Eve Franklin and Mignon Waterman, shared with us their experiences in the legislature. The knowledge proved beneficial for helping us determine how to best capture a legislator’s attention. They shared with us that legislators are bombarded with a multitude of requests, at all hours of every day, during the short session, so, it is best to hone our information to about three main points—and be direct yet polite. They also shared the value of sending thank you correspondence when a legislator does something that is positive because so often they only hear from people who are angry about an action.

Most importantly, the former legislators expressed how vital

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"If this legislature doesn’t think we can afford to provide the most basic, preventative, and life sustaining services to those of us who need them in the most cost effective settings, we as Montanans need to let them know that we certainly cannot afford the alternatives, which will not only cost more money but will also cost lives.” ~Travis Hoffman
Our Lives, Our Homes, Our Communities Rally

Montana’s Independent Living Centers, along with AARP Montana, Disability Rights Montana, Montana Association of Community Disability Services, Mental Health America of Montana, the Area Agencies on Aging, the Community Mental Health Centers, and consumers from all across Montana rallied in the Capitol Rotunda in Helena on Thursday, March 10th to send a message to legislators and the public about the real cost of balancing the budget on the backs of Montanans who can least afford it.

Speakers at the rally included Senator Dave Wanzenried, Claudia Clifford from AARP, Anita Roessman from Disability Rights Montana, Erin McGowan Fincham from the AAA’s, Jan Cahill from Montana CDS, Kathy McGowan from the Community Mental Health Centers, Travis Hoffman for the Centers for Independent Living, and June Hermanson from Montana Youth Transitions. Approximately 60 ralliers in addition to a few legislators attended the rally.

The rally was in protest of draconian budget cuts the Montana Legislature has made to human service programs. Those cuts include a reduction in personal assistance meal preparation services, a reduction in HCBS waiver slot funding, and many other cuts to vital services that Montana’s seniors and people with disabilities depend on every day.

To read more about the rally or view pictures from the event, please visit www.summitilc.org and visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/pages/Summit-Independent-Living-Center-Inc/98467702265.

No Fooling with Our Future Rally

On April 1, 2011, disability advocates joined approximately 1,500-2,000 Montana citizens from all across the state in front of the Capitol in Helena for the No Fooling with Our Future rally. MEA-MFT organized the rally along with the Partnership for Montana's Future. Concerned about the legislature's deep cuts to education, human services, children's health programs, public safety, home heating assistance, and more, rally participants collectively called on the Montana Legislature to reverse its cuts and put people first.

Summit’s advocacy coordinator and independent living lobbyist, Travis Hoffman, was one of 15 speakers at the rally, which included a speech by Superintendent of Public Instruction, Denise Juneau, and a surprise appearance by Governor Brian Schweitzer.

The rally was one of the broadest coalitions of groups coming together to stand in solidarity against the inhumane and unnecessary budget cuts that have been passed by the 2011 legislature and was, by far, the largest rally of the session. To read more about the rally or view pictures from the event, please visit www.summitilc.org and visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/pages/Summit-Independent-Living-Center-Inc/98467702265.
Statewide Independent Living Legislative Day…Continued from Page 1

personal contact with constituents is to the democratic process. While legislators are human and have real-world experience, they cannot be experts on every subject. Furthermore, they need to know that they are voting for something their constituents support. Legislators are often faced with tough decisions that will affect thousands of people. At times it may be easy to overlook the voices that aren’t present in favor of a different proposal. So, when constituents are willing to stand before them and share their heartfelt experiences it can be powerful enough to sway even the staunchest of opponents.

After the workshop, participants traveled to the Capitol Rotunda where a luncheon was arranged. The Rotunda was bustling with activity and legislators (along with other government officials) were treated to lunch while sitting down to talk with constituents. Constituents from the independent living centers arranged literature and signage that highlighted our issues. Tables were labeled by geographic location so that legislators could meet with people specifically from their districts. Volunteers stood at all entry points with packets and talked with most every legislator who traveled through the Rotunda. While responses were varied, most all people were receptive to speaking with us or at least taking an information packet. We made contact with approximately 35 legislators. Many legislators sat with us and discussed our issues, with some asking questions to gather more information.

Before the end of the day, a press conference showcased several speakers from the various independent living centers. During the debriefing phase of our visit, it was rewarding to listen to the excited recollections that fellow visitors shared of their experiences. The event was very successful. There were number of legislators who not only took information packets but also took the time to speak directly with constituents. While no one can guarantee how a legislator will vote, it is these very actions that have the potential to influence the legislative process in a meaningful way.
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Mary Millin, People 1st Advisor

Lake County
Michelle Williamson, co-Coordinator
Scott Williamson, co-Coordinator

Ravalli County Update

First of all, welcome to Elizabeth Varnum, the new part time Independent Living Specialist. Elizabeth’s office hours are from 8 a.m. to noon, Monday through Friday. In the past, Serenity has held that position full time, but she has reduced her hours to part time, with office hours from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. The offices will be closed from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. for lunch. The Independent Living Specialists provide information and referral services, assistance in identifying and securing appropriate benefits, services, and community resources, as well as providing self-advocacy and other independent living skills training to enhance self-confidence, decision-making, and problem-solving skills to improve the overall independence, quality of life, and community participation of individuals with disabilities.

To enhance community participation, we periodically host a variety of social activities throughout the year. Currently we have plans for an exciting, fun-filled social activity and would like you to join us for a Karaoke & Comedy Night on Saturday, May 14th, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Hamilton City Hall Community Center, 223 South 2nd Street in Hamilton. We will have the honor of entertainment by comedian Mike Beers of Missoula as well as having a variety of Karaoke selections. Be sure to get your vocal chords ready and join in the fun! Give us a call at 363-5242 to let us know if you plan to attend. We will be serving food & soft drinks, so we’ll need a head count. Future social activities may include a picnic in July, a gathering at Daly Mansion in September, and a Wii Bowling Tournament in November, all of which are in early planning stages. Bitterroot Glory Days will be held at the Ravalli County Fairgrounds over the 4th of July weekend, which is filled with a variety of activities and equestrian events. Last year, one of the activities included Summit’s “wheelchair challenge,” which proved very educational to those who accepted the challenge, so we are considering taking part in the event again this year. Stay tuned for further information on all the upcoming activities and events.

On June 17th, Summit will be participating in the local Relay for Life, which begins at 6 p.m. at the Corvallis Community Event Center track and the relay ends the following morning at 8 a.m. with a free breakfast provided by the Knights of Columbus. Our team name is the Summit Survivors and we are still looking for team members if you are interested in joining the cause. We’re also accepting donations and will be having a few fundraisers, including a car wash, a bake sale at the local Farmers Market, etc. So if you are interested in assisting with any of the fundraising or activities, please give us a call at 363-5242, as we are accepting volunteers of all shapes and sizes.

The Bitterroot Valley People First Aktion Club will be assisting with the

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Flathead County Update

The Flathead County office has recently started the finishing touches on the Gateway Community Center office space. Interior windows are in and the interior doors should be installed by the time this goes to press. We are enjoying our new offices very much and encourage you to stop by and take a look.

February 19th was the Summit Luau and we had a fantastic time. Entertainment was provided by the Halau Ka Waikahe Lani Malie School of Hula. Attendees also had fun with a Tacky Tourist relay race, beach volleyball, and, of course, some limbo. We look forward to our next event, which will be on May 21st. Be sure to save the date on your calendar. An overnight Retreat at Flathead Lake in August is also in the planning stages. If you would like to be on the social activities mailing list, please call 257-0048.

A Working Well with a Disability workshop will begin May 6th and meet each Friday morning from 10:00 to 12:00. If you would like to participate in this workshop, or any future workshops, please call 257-0048 to get on the waiting list.

Lake County Update

Here in Lake County we have been busy with the Living Well classes and are in the process of starting up a Working Well with a Disability class, which will be lead by Michelle Williamson.

We are continuing to recruit people to become peer advocates. There will be a peer meeting in late April where the peers will plan out their upcoming events and projects.

The Medicaid Infrastructure Grant 2011 Empowerment Conference for Native Americans with Disabilities was held on April 11th – 13th at the KwaTaqNuk Resort in Polson.

The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) also held a meeting at the KwaTaqNuk on April 11th to meet with tribal members who have a disability and hear about their concerns or success stories.

Updates on the Empowerment Conference and the SILC meeting will be in our July newsletter so be sure to pick up a copy of The Summit Independent in July as well.

Contact Scott Williamson at 676-0190 for more information or to get involved with Summit.
Ravalli County Update…Continued from page 4

Relay for Life activities and fundraising, as well having their next social activity, a club potluck, on Friday, May 20th at United Methodist-American Baptist Church at 211 North 6th Street in Hamilton.

As the 2011 legislative session comes to a close, don’t forget to thank those legislators who listened and supported you throughout the session, and be prepared for more advocacy efforts if they call a special session!

Joanne Verwolf, Ravalli County Coordinator

Missoula County Update

This winter Summit facilitated three classes in our conference room. Living Well with a Disability led by Andrea Dahl and Darren Larson, Working Well with a Disability led by Darren Larson and Jude Monson, and a communication class called Mind over Mood led by Leanne Beers. If you are interested in taking classes at Summit this summer or next fall call Jude or Kathy at 728-1630 to find out more about upcoming classes.

April is national volunteer month and we want to mention some people who are important to us. Summit’s Missoula office has the pleasure of working with Senior Companions Rose Blick, Karen Bollinger, Eva Warthem, John Weig and Betty Zander who meet with 30 elders who live in our community. Peer Advocate Bill Vinner made creative posters for all the events we have hosted or participated in this winter. Student Interns Erin Giefer assists Travis Hoffman with the 2011 legislative session and Rebecca Pettit has worked with Mike Mayer to develop some fundraising options. Former journalism student Justyn Field has recently been hired as the communication/media specialist for the Medicaid for Workers with Disabilities education campaign. Leanne Beers, one of Summit’s board members, has facilitated a couple of communication classes. Thank you to all of you who keep the spirit of the disability and independent living movement strong!

Our April Spring into Motion social event was a great way to learn more fun ways to exercise and be fit. Thank you to Mary Olson and her team for organizing this event. Check out our website calendar for the summer social event activities or better yet call Mary at 728-1630 and ask how you could help her this summer. Mary and the Peer Advocates have also been working on advocating for legislative issues, nursing home transition, Every Woman Matters poster education and school panel presentations.

Starting in May, Susan Morris will be ready to offer the Safer and Stronger Program for women we mentioned in our January newsletter. Contact her at 728-1630 if you are interested in hearing more about this project.

Mike Beers and Darren are active in the Missoula Youth Forum and Darren is a representative member of the Missoula Youth Development Network Oversight Committee. Mike and Mary also continued to offer Building Advocacy and Learning Leadership Skills (BALLS) in Missoula high schools over the winter. They can also offer a 1-hour history of disability and culture training to a 6 hour LEAD ON workshop. Call them if you are interested!
2011 Legislative Update

The 2011 Legislature is still going full steam ahead but we wanted to take this opportunity to provide this update of the legislation the Montana Centers for Independent Living has been working on this session. For more complete details about each of the bills we have been following, which are listed below, please go to www.summitilc.org/mtcil.

Bills Supported
• HB 130: Expand types of elections to be conducted by mail ballot elections.
• HB 248: Provide for a tax credit for the purchase of long-term care insurance.
• HB 252: Prohibit Department of Transportation from recovering indirect costs for federal grants.
• HB 437: Providing Medicaid coverage for orientation and mobility services.
• HB 485: Funding for youth in transition.
• HB 395: Consider housing needs in discharge plans from mental health facilities
• SB 154: Regulating medical marijuana provider supply system.
• SB 351: Revise laws governing managed care.
• HB 625: Provide wage increase to direct care employees in community-based services.
• HB 626: Increase tobacco product taxes.

Bills Opposed
• HB 31: Prevent providing vehicle to person who does not have driver's license.
• HB 152: Revise proof of residency and identity requirements for voting.
• HB 139: Eliminate the Provider Rates Commission.
• HB 316: Redistribute certain revenue and income to the state general fund.
• HB 375: Reduce certain general fund transfers.
• HJ 2: Revenue estimating resolution.
• HB 180: Revise Close of voter registration.

We have also been actively working on HB 2, the state’s budget bill, to restore many of the painful funding cuts that have occurred and to ensure that the services many people with disabilities rely on every day remain intact.

If you would like to get involved in our legislative efforts, please join our action Alert Listserv by sending an email to montana-il-action-alert-subscribe@googlegroups.com. A final tally of our legislative efforts will be in our July

BULLETIN BOARD

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

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Quickie V121 Power Wheelchair. Black, battery cases, headrest, oxygen tank holder, and backpack. Rarely used. $1,000 OBO. 406-531-7662 or 406-543-4521.

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 Travis Hoffman at 728-1630. Or, list and find those hard-to-find items on the Montech item exchange website at: http://montech.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/mtdb/

Coming Soon!

Over the next eight months, Summit will be conducting an education campaign about the Medicaid for Workers with Disabilities program.

Justyn Field, Summit’s new communications & media specialist, will be spearheading this effort.

So, if you are asking yourself “How does this darn thing work?” or “How does the Medicaid for workers with Disabilities program benefit me?” …stay tuned for more information about how you can go back to work AND keep your health care benefits.
Changes to the Americans with Disabilities Act

The new regulations apply to Title II of the ADA, covering programs, activities, and services of public entities, and Title III of the ADA, covering public accommodations, commercial facilities and private entities offering certain examinations and courses. Common examples of facilities covered under Title II include state and local government offices, public schools, and state licensing and exam centers. Common examples of facilities covered under Title III include hospitals, doctors' offices, restaurants, retail stores, hotels, movie theaters, private schools, convention centers, day care centers, and recreation facilities, such as sports stadiums and fitness clubs.

Among other substantive changes, the amended regulations adopt the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, which implement new accessibility guidelines for government facilities and commercial places of public accommodation. In addition, the amended regulations address numerous accessibility issues, including selling and issuing event tickets to individuals with disabilities; accommodating service animals, wheelchairs and other power-driven mobility devices; providing auxiliary communication aids; and making reservations in places of lodging.

To learn more the new changes to the Americans with Disabilities Act, please visit http://www.ada.gov/regs2010/ADAregs2010.htm or if you have specific questions, please contact the Rocky Mountain Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center at 1-800-949-4232 or visit www.adainformation.org.