April is Volunteer Month

Thank you to all the people who have volunteered at Summit over our 31 years! This is the month to remember that we wouldn’t be where we are at if we hadn’t had individuals who thought Summit had a place to offer their skills and time.

Thank you to Summit’s board, Senior Companions, Peers and students who offer their time toward our advocacy and resource center!

Jude Monson, Program Manager

CIL ☞ Center for Independent Living

Centers for Independent Living are advocacy and resource centers for people with disabilities.

Summit Independent Living Center is a CIL!

There are four CILs in Montana: Summit, MILP, LIFTT and NCILS.

MVR ☞ Montana Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational Rehabilitation, sometimes called Voc Rehab, can assist people with disabilities to find or keep their jobs.

MVR provides services to the entire state of Montana.

OPA ☞ Office of Public Assistance

The Office of Public Assistance is a place where people go to apply for and receive services.

The OPA runs programs such as Medicaid, which helps pay for medical services and equipment like hospital stays and wheelchairs, and SNAP, formerly known as food stamps.

SNAP ☞ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

SNAP helps people with limited incomes buy food from the store.

People with SNAP buy food by using a card that looks and works just like a debit card!
Upcoming Events

Flathead County

April 27, 3:00 - 6:00: Let's Move It Social Event, The Summit Medical Fitness Center
Must register for event by April 18!

Call Flo at (406) 257-0048 for more information or to register.

Ravalli County

March 29, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.: Women on the Move social activity, Human Resource Council Building, Conference Room, 316 North 3rd St, Hamilton

April 6, 1 p.m.: The Man Cave social activity, Sapphire Homes, 501 North 10th Street, Hamilton

April 8, 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.: Summit Orientation and Social Security Training, Human Resource Council Building, Conference Room, 316 North 3rd St, Hamilton

May 6, 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.: Summit Orientation and Social Security Training, Human Resource Council Building, Conference Room, 316 North 3rd St, Hamilton

May 22, 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.: Montana Telecommunications Access Program (MTAP) Technology Fair, Human Resource Council Building Conference Room, 316 North 3rd St, Hamilton

June 3, 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.: Summit Orientation and Social Security Training, Human Resource Council Building, Conference Room, 316 North 3rd St, Hamilton

June 20, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.: Summer Solstice Picnic, Three Sisters Group Site, Lake Como, Ravalli County

July 1, 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.: Summit Orientation and Social Security Training, Human Resource Council Building, Conference Room, 316 North 3rd St, Hamilton

July: Bitterroot Float Trips – dates to be announced

Call Joanne at (406) 363-5242 for more information or to register.

Summit Board

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

Missoula County

Executive Director
  Mike Mayer
Program Manager
  Jude Monson
SDPAS Program Manager
  Mike Giddings
SDPAS Specialist
  Nicole Auer
SDPAS Assistant
  Betsy Ames
Advocacy Coordinator
  Travis Hoffman
Peer Advocacy Coordinator
  Chris Clasby
Missoula People First Advisor/IL Specialist
  Andrea Dahl
Independent Living Specialist
  Darren Larson
Youth Coordinator
  Michael Beers
Youth Specialist
  Cara Wherley
Outreach Specialist
  Susan Morris
Secretary
  Kathy Boyer
Bookkeeper
  Libby Miller
Assistant Bookkeeper
  Sally Wahl

Flathead County

Coordinator
  Flo Kiewel
IL Specialist
  Dianna Kintzler

Ravalli County

Coordinator
  Joanne Verwolf
IL Specialist
  Elizabeth Varnum
People First Advisor
  Mary Millin

Lake County

Co-Coordinator
  Michelle Williamson
Co-Coordinator
  Scott Williamson

Upcoming Events

Missoula County

Unless otherwise noted, classes are held in Summit’s Conference Room

April 2, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. : Orientation for Working Well and Assertiveness classes

April 8 - May 20, Monday, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. : Assertiveness Class

April 9 - May 21, Tuesday, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. : Working Well with a Disability

April 5, May 3 and June 7, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. : Summit Orientation

April 24-26 : Montana Transit Association Conference, Holiday Inn - Parkside, Missoula
  Call Kathy at (406) 728-1630 for more information or to register.

Lake County

Ongoing : Working Well, Salish-Kootenai College, Bookstore Building

Every Third Thursday : People First
  Call Michelle or Scott at (406) 676-0190 for more information or to register.
Spring is in the Air!
A little talk on the birds and the bees
by Leanne Beers & Marsha Katz

Spring is just around the corner, and all of the animals, including humans, are experiencing a rise in our “Twitterpation.” And yes, this also includes those of us with various disabilities. We have sexual needs and desires, too.

The bottom line is that our desires and needs for intimacy and sexual behavior are perfectly natural!

The desire to learn more and know more about sexual behavior and intimacy is an essential part of being human, able-bodied or not. The physical and emotional aspects of sexuality, despite any physical loss of function we may experience, are just as important for disabled people as for non-disabled people. When we become fully aware of our bodies and their capabilities (in terms of emotional and physical intimacy and sexual behavior), we empower ourselves to be intimate, to be able to communicate our needs, and to engage in satisfying sex, whether alone or with another person.

There are those who see disabled sex as taboo. However denying this aspect of our humanity does not make it go away. Not only does that view take away from our humanity, but it is also argued that by denying people with disabilities lives with intimacy, we are denying access to full human rights. Gary Karp (1999) says it best, “Whatever your situation—whether newly injured or living with a disability all your life, young or mature, single or in a committed relationship—sexuality is a part of your nature.”

When considering whether to pursue or continue intimacy and/or sexual behavior, we need to remind ourselves that:

- Each of us is a precious, worthwhile person who deserves to love, and receive love through emotional and physical intimacy.
- We need to follow our intuition and learn about our individual bodies, and how they react to different methods of touch.
- Once we become aware of what we are thinking, consciously and unconsciously, and what we are feeling, we empower ourselves to get our needs met and our desires fulfilled.

Our unconscious assumptions about what various parts of our bodies are capable of feeling can unnecessarily limit our potential pleasure if we let them. So we must put those assumptions aside and find out for ourselves what feels good, what we want, what we don’t want, and how all the parts of our bodies react to touch.

For further information check out the following website and books:

www.sexualityanddisability.org

Love, Sex and Disability
by Sarah Smith Rainey

The Ultimate Guide to Sex and Disability
by Miriam Kaufman, Cory Silverberg, and Fran Odette
Most experts agree, muscle burns more calories than fat. Muscles are more compact and look better than fat. It is important to rev up your metabolism by regularly working your muscles.

When exercising, it is important to always use a controlled motion.

Even if you can’t get to a gym, there is plenty you can do at home. For example you can use gravity, isometrics, bands or even weights. Be creative.

A great example of gravity exercises are push-ups and sit-ups. You can even do incline push-ups by placing your hands on a couch instead of the floor; a simple variation to this popular exercise. Push-ups challenge your arms, shoulders, abdominal muscles and chest.

Isometrics are when you press two body parts against each other, like pushing your hands together.

You can use elastic bands to work muscles. Stores sell a variety of elastic bands in different colors to represent the resistance. There are both lower and upper body exercises one can do with a band.

And finally, you can also use dumbbells or even common household items like an iron to work arm, back, chest and abdominal muscles. I recommend you pick up one of the numerous books on the subject to regularly challenge your muscles.

Tom Thompson can be emailed at tomskilaw@gmail.com

Have you heard about Sports Illustrated Kids 2012 SportsKids of the Year, Conner and Cayden Long?

If not, check out the award-winning siblings’ story online at: www.sikids.com/skoty

Competing in triathalons, bonding and showing their community that everyone belongs, these kids show the world what Independent Living is all about!

Conner and Cayden Long, the 2012 SI Sportskids of the Year. (Image via SIKids.com)
Legislative Update
by Travis Hoffman

We are a little more than halfway through the 2013 Montana Legislative Session and so far things are looking okay. Montana’s Centers for Independent Living entered this legislative session with a few legislative priorities. Our goals included: restoring personal assistance services funding for meal preparation, increasing Medicaid provider rates, extending funding for the Health Care for Health Care Workers program, obtaining legislative authority to implement the Community First Choice Option and reinstating funding for the Montana Youth Transitions project.

Since the 2013 Legislative Session began, we have been able to get a commitment from the Governor’s office to fund the Montana Youth Transitions project out of existing state funds, so we do not have to seek a separate bill through the legislature for the funds. Also, during initial budget negotiations in the Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, the subcommittee chose to approve funding for personal assistance services meal preparation, increased Medicaid provider rates, the Community First Choice Option, and the Health Care for Health Care Workers program. In addition to the subcommittee fully supporting our legislative priorities that we entered the session with, we were also able to gain support for a housing bridge assistance program for individuals who will be transferring out of institutions under the Money Follows the Person demonstration program.

The first part of this Legislative session has been quite a success and we should all be thanking the members of the Joint Subcommittee on Health and Human Services. However, we are still only a little over halfway through the session and the budget bill (HB 2) is now on its way to the Senate where it will be heard in the Senate Finance Committee. There is still the very real possibility that some of the gains we have seen could be slashed in the Senate.

2013 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

1. Restore Personal Assistance Services
2. Increase Medicaid Provider Rates
3. Provide Health Care for Health Care Workers
4. Implement Community First Choice Option
5. Fund Montana Youth Transitions

This is why it is still so incredibly important for you to stay involved and contact members of the legislature when opportunities arise to help ensure that they understand how important Medicaid and other services are to individuals with disabilities and what it would mean to you if any of the programs you rely upon were cut.

If you would like to follow the Montana’s Centers for Independent Living legislative work please visit our website at:

www.summitilc.org/mtcil.html

Also, to learn about opportunities for contacting legislators on issues that affect the lives of individuals with disabilities, please join the Montana Independent Living Action Alert Listserv by sending an email to:

montana-il-action-alert+subscribe@googlegroups.com
Peers to You
by Chris Clasby

The Peer Advocacy Program is active and thriving. Each individual peer advocate brings unique strengths to the program, and the peer group collectively works very well together to accomplish common goals. New peers have brought their strengths to the program and look forward to helping individuals achieve their goals as well as tackling larger, systems-based solutions.

In the new year, Summit has conducted some small-group peer trainings and has already added three new peers to the program. The new peers have brought more expertise in the areas of youth, mental health, aging and low-vision. With a couple other peers-in-training, soon to become official peers, the program will be enriched with even more knowledge and experience. New and seasoned peers have worked together on disability public awareness and other activities.

Peers from Summit and our partner Montana Centers for Independent Living have been active in the state capitol in Helena this legislative season. On January 25, IL Legislative Day, peers converged in Helena to approach their representatives, other legislators and staff to inform them how pending legislation affects their lives and to thank them for their service. On March 8, many peers again returned to Helena to express IL needs and concerns, discuss legislative issues and ask for representatives’ support.

Peers look forward to continuing opportunities to work with others with disabilities in our service area and to work together on group activities. They will also be taking and participating in upcoming IL skills training opportunities, doing presentations and participating in our community. To benefit from our peer advocacy program through a one-on-one peer match or group peer activity, or to learn more about our peer program, contact Summit directly.
Summit Electronic Newsletter Challenge
(Part Deux - Contest still running!)

Did you know that you can sign up to receive our newsletter via e-mail?
We are now sending out 60 electronic copies, but we are still mailing out more than 1,900 hardcopies.
So we are upping the ante and making a fun “Disability Faux Paus” YouTube video, featuring some of the best comedians from Western Montana!
There’s a catch, though. The video is currently zero minutes long—and it will only increase in length if we get more people signed up for the electronic newsletter!

Community Prize: For every 50 people that sign up for the electronic version, we will add 1 minute to our video—up to 250 people for a 5-minute comedy extravaganza!

Personal Prize: If you call or e-mail Kathy at Summit, 728-1630 or kboyer@summitilc.org, and SWITCH your subscription from hardcopy to electronic-only, you will have a chance to get a cameo in our video!

That’s right. You could be a YouTube star! (Or at least get a chance to hang out with award-winning comedian Mike Beers for a day.)
If you win but don’t want to be in the video, you could also get a chance to receive a giftcard to an as-of-yet unknown location.
So what are you waiting for? Get your friends and co-workers signed up for the FREE newsletter with disability news from Western Montana and switch your subscription to electronic. We know you have the stuff to be a YouTube star!

Note: Summit staff and boardmembers are not eligible for the awesome Personal Prize—but if you work with Summit, you’re already awesome!
Please let Kathy know that you want to be entered into the prize pool if you switch subscriptions (or if you don’t want to).