July is a month when we celebrate our freedom as a country and as individuals, and recommit to protecting liberty for ourselves and our loved ones. Not only is it the month in which the Declaration of Independence was signed, but it is also the month in which the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed in 1990.

The ADA was a hard-won acknowledgement that people with disabilities are citizens like anyone else, and have the right to access not just buildings, but the activities inside them, employment in community businesses, life in the community, community transportation and so much more.

Disability is an equal opportunity experience, one we may be born with, or acquire along the way from a health condition, the natural aging process, or an incident of some kind. The ADA, along with other complementary laws, has been instrumental in the momentous shift in the attitudes and expectations of the 125,000 Montanans with disabilities, their families, friends and communities.

Before the passage of the ADA, Justin Dart, former EEOC Commissioner, and a member of the family that gave the world Tupperware, travelled with his wife Yoshiko, to every state in the country, including Montana, to document the lack of access and exclusion experienced by citizens with disabilities. Their reports documented the need for the ADA. When the bill struggled in Congress, members of ADAPT, a national grassroots disability rights organization, gathered in Washington, were helped out of their wheelchairs, and crawled up the steps of the US Capitol Building to demonstrate its inaccessibility. The “Capitol Crawl” has been credited as the action that finally achieved passage of the ADA. When then President, George H.W. Bush, signed the ADA into law, with Justin Dart and others by his side, he said, “Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down.”

As monumental as the ADA has been, more remains to be done. As more information and communication move online, accessibility features must become commonplace and simple for designers to implement. Young people with disabilities must receive the support they need to transition successfully into the adult world alongside their peers. Policy and attitudinal barriers must be knocked down for the more than 60 percent of working-age people with disabilities currently excluded from the workforce, so they can contribute their talents to our state. Segregation in some aspects of life is still tolerated, and sometimes encouraged by outdated policies that must be changed.
Upcoming Events

Flathead County

Social Security Orientation - July 17, 9 a.m. Returns to normal schedule in August of First Friday monthly, 9 a.m., and third Friday monthly, 1 p.m.
YODA - youth group meets once a month.
Living Well with a Disability - TBA
Working Well with a Disability - TBA
Independence Day Parade - July 4. We will gather behind our ADA 25th banner and march down main street in Kalispell as part of the parade wearing red, white and blue with ADA 25 gear. Bikes, scooters, skateboards, golf carts and the like welcome.
Climb Big Mountain Fundraiser for Flathead Industries - July 18. Summit and Flathead Industries will be celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the ADA at this event with activities and cake. If you would like to be part of our climb team, call (406) 257-0048 ext. 140. For more information about Climb Big Mountain go to http://flatheadindustries.org/fund-raising-events.html

Social Activities - We get together four times a year for social activities. Call the office to put your name on the mailing list so you won’t miss the next fun and exciting adventure!

Unless otherwise noted, classes and groups meet at:

Gateway Community Center, United Way Conference Room
1203 Hwy 2 West, Kalispell

Call Lynae, (406) 257-0048, ext. 142, for more information or to register.

Ravalli County

Social Security Orientations - July 13, Aug. 3, Sep. 14
Man Cave - July 16, Aug. 20, Sep. 17
People First - Tuesdays, 3-4 p.m.
Women on the Move - July 22, Aug. 19, Sep. 16
TGIAF - Thank Goodness It’s Activity Friday - Fridays, 1-3 p.m.
Farmers Market - ADA 25th Celebration Booth, July 11.
Daly Days - July 24-25.

Unless otherwise noted, classes and groups meet at:

Human Resources Council Building, Summit Conference Room
316 N 3rd St., Hamilton

Call Joel, Mary or Sarah, (406) 363-5242, for more information or to register.
Several new laws improve voting access

Thanks to the 2015 Legislature, elections are now much more accessible to voters with disabilities.

Until now, voters with disabilities had very few options to vote accessibly and privately. At the polls, voters with disabilities could use an AutoMark voting machine. However, individuals who wanted to vote by absentee ballot either had to travel to their nearest polling place, which was sometimes a great distance, to use an AutoMark machine or rely on someone to fill out their ballot.

Now, thanks to the passage of HB 400, voters with disabilities will have access to an accessible means of voting absentee by being able to request and vote on an emailed, electronic ballot as a reasonable accommodation. This bill will make it easier for voters with disabilities to independently and privately fill out their own ballots electronically at home and then print out and mail their ballot back in a secrecy envelope, or print, scan, and email their voted ballots back, as current absentee and overseas military voters do.

Another law that increases access is HB 209. Individuals with disabilities can now to designate an agent as a reasonable accommodation for providing assistance throughout the registration and voting process.

If you are interested in learning more about either of these changes, or to request an electronic ballot or assign a designated agent, simply contact your county election administrator's office.

Medicaid for Workers with Disabilities changes

Starting in July, Montana’s Medicaid for Workers with Disabilities program (MWD) will undergo two major changes.

The first is that asset limits will increase to $15,000 for an eligible individual and $30,000 for a couple, from previous limits of $8,000 and $12,000.

The second change is that retirement accounts established while participants are actively enrolled in MWD will not count as a resource against other Medicaid programs when they exit the program.

For more information please contact Summit ILC or speak with your benefits planner.
**Upcoming Events**

**Missoula County**

**Summit Closed** - July 3, July 6, Sept. 7

**Summit Orientation** - July 10, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. Returns to normal schedule in August of first Fridays monthly, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

**SSA Orientation** - July 10, 10-11 a.m., July 21, 1-2 p.m., Aug. 14 10-11 a.m., Aug. 25 1-2 p.m., Sep. 11, 10-11 a.m., Sep. 22, 1-2 p.m.

**People First** - First and third Wednesday of each month, 4-5 p.m.

**Alzheimer’s Support Group** - Second Wednesday of each month, 12-2 p.m.

**Blind Low Vision Support Group** - Second Tuesday of each month, 1-2:30 p.m.

**Epilepsy Support Group** - First Monday of each month, 2-3:30 p.m. *(No meeting July 6 or Sep. 7)*

**ADA Legacy Bus Tour** - July 4, 10 A.M. - 2 P.M. Caras Park. Meet advocates from all over the country, check out the bus and celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the ADA with us!

**Missoula ADA Community Picnic** - July 14, 4-7 P.M. McCormick Park. People with disabilities, their family and friends can come eat and celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the ADA.

**14 Weeks to a Healthier You** - Mondays, July 13-Oct. 19, 4-5 p.m.

**Living Well with a Disability** - Mondays, Sep. 14-Nov. 23, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.


**Working Well with a Disability** - Tuesdays, Sep. 15-Nov. 3, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

The following activities are now meeting at **BASE, 725 West Alder, No. 4, across from St. Pats and next to Draughtworks in the Warehouse Mall.**

**Video Game Night** - Second and fourth Thursday of each month, 3-6 p.m.

**Youth Opening Doors through Advocacy (YODA)** -
  Fourth Wednesday of each month, 3:30-6 p.m.

**Art Group** - Second and fourth Thursday of each month, 2-4 p.m.

Unless otherwise noted, classes and groups meet at:

Summit ILC, Summit’s Conference Room
700 SW Higgins, Suite 101, Missoula

Call Kathy, (406) 728-1630, for more information or to register.
ADA 25th Anniversary Celebration (cont.)

In 2007, as part of the movement to get the ADA Amendments Act passed by Congress, Montana was chosen as one of the states to receive a visit from the Road to Freedom bus tour. The Road to Freedom bus, which can be seen at www.roadtofreedom.net, is covered in historic photos of the disability rights movement and is accompanied by renown photographer, Tom Olin, whose photos chronicling the movement have been featured in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. Tom’s photos also appear as a part of permanent exhibits in the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis and the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta.

We invite the entire state of Montana to join in the Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the ADA when the ADA Legacy Tour Road to Freedom bus revisits Montana this summer. Enjoy fun activities, browse vendor booths, take photos with the bus, and celebrate at Montana’s ADA 25th Anniversary events: July 2 in Billings at Kmart from 8 a.m.-2 p.m., July 3 in Great Falls at Lions Park from 10 a.m.-12 p.m., July 3 in Helena at the Montana State Capitol from 2 p.m.-5 p.m., and July 4 in Missoula at Caras Park from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Come be a part of disability history, and enjoy yourself while pledging your commitment to help build a stronger future for Montana and all her citizens.

After all, July is a time to celebrate independence - for everyone.

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ADA 25th Anniversary Celebration (cont.)

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From Rin Tin Tin to Benji, Old Yeller to Toto, and Scooby Doo to Odie, dogs have had their place in many parts of American culture. They have entertained us, rescued us, kept us company, warned us of danger, and even transported us over rough terrain. The special place our canine companions hold in our hearts and lives is maybe best recognized and most appreciated in the roles they play in the lives of individuals with disabilities.

Some of those roles are protected by The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and its most recent revisions, but some clarification is necessary.

In reference to dogs and individuals with disabilities, the terms service dog, therapy dog, and companion dog are mistakenly thought to mean the same thing. However, the ADA has specific definitions and criteria for what is considered a service dog, which is the only one protected by federal law.

Service dogs are specifically defined as “dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities” in the ADA as revised in 2010. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person having a seizure, reminding someone with mental illness to take prescriptions, or calming a person with PTSD during an anxiety attack. Training a dog to do these tasks can be done by anyone, and there is no “certification” required to verify the dog’s ability.

Retired Missoula schoolteacher and current Summit Peer Advocate Coreen Faulkner’s guide dog, Kia, meets this specific ADA definition. Kia was trained by Service Dogs for the Blind to perform guide services to help Coreen navigate her environment independently. Whether around her home, the Missoula community, in another city, or traveling, Kia helps Coreen independently get around amongst traffic, other people, and objects. Coreen claims that another benefit Kia provides is that her presence enables strangers to relate to Coreen and opens a line of communication whereas they might otherwise be uncomfortable introducing themselves.

Therapy dogs and companion dogs are not service dogs and are therefore not protected by the ADA, so they are not mandated to be allowed in public places and commercial facilities. Therapy dogs are trained to visit nursing facilities, care homes, group homes, hospitals, schools, and individual homes to provide socialization and therapeutic comfort, so they are allowed in those environments. Companion dogs are not trained to perform specific tasks but rather to provide emotional support to their owners. With a doctor’s prescription or written recommendation from a therapist, a companion dog is allowed in housing units whether or not they have “no pets” policies.

The old nickname “man’s best friend” continues to be true in many situations, especially with reference to individuals with disabilities. Whether performing services to help individuals with specific tasks, providing therapeutic benefit, or providing comfort through companionship, dogs can help individuals with disabilities. While service dogs are the only ones protected by Title II and Title III of the ADA, therapy dogs are allowed in those environments in which they provide therapeutic benefit, and companion dogs are allowed in rental units. Anyone questioning the validity of a service dog can legally ask only two questions: 1) Is the dog a service dog required because of a disability? and 2) What specific work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

Many people with disabilities rely on their service animals to enjoy access to our communities, so please don’t falsely claim an animal is a service dog when it is not so you can bring it into an otherwise animal-free area. Not only is it unethical, but it endangers the rights of your fellow citizens to be independent.

For more specific information about ADA protections and service dogs for individuals with disabilities, please see: www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm
New Staff at BASE

Renae Stiles
BASE Advisor

Renae is around to organize our new BASE space, run youth events, assist with teaching youth classes and help as needed.

Renae loves outdoor activities, including floating, swimming and hunting.

She has a yorkie-terrier named Gizmo, who is working on becoming a companion animal.

Wesley Schneider
BASE Social Media Advisor

Wesley’s job includes managing BASE’s Facebook and social media, promoting BASE, and helping host podcasts on Brain Injury Radio.

Wes plays guitar and bass.

He lives independently with two roomies, and starts his senior year of high school in the fall.

Wes has a chihuahua named Mojo.

Welcome Renae and Wes!

MONTANA ABLE ACT Update

Goal: Creates a new option for some people with disabilities to save money for the future, while protecting eligibility for public benefits.

People who acquired their disability age 26 or before and who use needs-based programs, such as SSI and Medicaid, will be able to save money beyond typical limits in Montana starting in November.

Up to $14,000 per year from self, family, friends and community members can be saved for disability expenses including: education, housing, transportation, employment training and support, assistive technology and health services.

Stay tuned as more rules and details emerge about this opportunity.
This publication is available in alternative format on request. Please call 1 (800) 398-9002.

Our Lives
Our Freedom
Americans with Disabilities Act

**ADAMT 25**

Celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the ADA
With Us!

**Kalispell**

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Remember, you can always sign up for the electronic newsletter by contacting: missoula@summitilc.org