Community Choice is the KEY to Healthcare Reform

Disability Advocates across the Nation are pressuring the US Senate, and specifically Max Baucus, to include the Community Choice Act in Healthcare Reform.

Disability advocates across the nation are becoming increasingly frustrated with Congress and the Obama Administration for their, sometimes hostile, refusal to include long-term services and supports for low-income individuals with disabilities and seniors, specifically the Community Choice Act which would end the institutional bias in our current Medicaid system, from being included, let alone even being discussed, in the current Healthcare Reform proposals currently being drafted.

Montana’s very own Senator, Max Baucus, who plays an extremely important role in Healthcare Reform as the Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, has been contacted regarding this important issue by thousands of advocates from across the nation, many of those contacts coming directly from right here Montana. However, he still does not understand the importance of including the Community Choice Act and bringing meaningful change to the way long-term services and supports are provided in Healthcare Reform.

Senator Baucus, instead, wants to expand on the current waiver system which will only increase the availability of optional services that states may choose to provide but will not have to and that will continue to be at risk of cuts or elimination should there be a budget shortfall.

Therefore, in addition to the July 2, 2009 rallies across the state of Montana and because we received no follow up on a promise to have a meeting scheduled with Senator Baucus by early the following week, on July 21, Continued on Page 2...
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2009, ADAPT, the nation's largest grassroots disability rights organization, and disability advocates in 25 states staged simultaneous protests at Democratic offices across the country, including Sen. Max Baucus’ office in Missoula, MT.

Something must be done NOW to include Long Term Services and Supports in the Health Care Reform proposals for persons who continue to be victims of the Medicaid “Institutional Bias.”

The Missoula Coalition for Disability Rights, under the leadership of ADAPT Montana, Summit Independent Living Center, and Missoula Aging Services, led the protest at Sen. Baucus’ office in Missoula. Roughly 40 disability and senior advocates gathered at Sen. Baucus’ office where eight people went inside to talk to his staff and vowed not to leave until our demands were met. Those demands are:

1. Issue a public apology on behalf of the Democratic National Committee for creating the institutional bias in 1965 which has for 44 years stolen the lives of countless seniors and persons with disabilities who have been, and continue to be, forced into nursing facilities and other institutions;

2. Issue a public statement calling for Congress to eliminate the Medicaid institutional bias in 2009 either in health care reform or separate legislation;

3. Facilitate a meeting between ADAPT activists currently in the DNC offices and yourself, Senator Max Baucus (chair of the Senate Finance Committee), Representative Henry Waxman (chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee) and Valerie Jarrett (Senior Policy Advisor to the President) to develop a plan to pass the Community Choice Act and eliminate the institutional bias in 2009;

4. Meet with the disability and aging community in Montana to tell us what you will do to meet the need for Long Term Services and Supports in Health Care Reform and to eliminate the institutional bias in Medicaid.

What we are calling for is for Congress to eliminate the Medicaid institutional bias that currently exists in title XIX of the Social Security Act which mandates that all states that participate in the Medicaid program to provide long-term services and supports in a nursing home but leaves home and community-based long-term services and supports only optional. Disability rights organizations and advocates want this institutional bias eliminated in 2009 by passing the Community Choice Act (CCA) (S683/HR1670) either as a part of healthcare reform or as separate legislation.

Under our current Medicaid long-term care system, low-income seniors and people with disabilities on Medicaid are often forced into nursing facilities and other institutions when a majority would prefer in-home services and supports. Currently, any state that participates in the Medicaid program, and all states do, must provide nursing home level long-term-care but are not mandated any state to provide home and

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On July 2, 2009, Montana's Centers for Independent Living and other organizations that serve Montanans with disabilities and seniors teamed up to host a series of simultaneous rallies, entitled "The Community Choice Act is KEY to Health Care Reform," to advocate for the need of including the Community Choice Act and long-term services and supports in healthcare reform, ending institutional bias in the current Medicaid long-term model.

The goal of the rallies was to tell Senator, Max Baucus, to support including the Community Choice Act in healthcare reform legislation. Senator Baucus is the Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, which has the jurisdiction over Medicaid programs and would be the Committee to include the language of the CCA in healthcare reform.

Summit and Montana’s other Centers for Independent Living believe that every American – including Americans with disabilities and older Americans – should have the right to live in freedom. No American should be required to give up their freedom or their freedom of choice in order to get long-term services and supports. On July 2nd, these messages were conveyed through hundreds of personal letters written by consumers and advocates and delivered to Senator Baucus' offices in Missoula, Kalispell, Helena, Butte, Bozeman, Great Falls and Billings.

Montana's rally efforts were broadcast in real time via Twitter and made national headlines within the disability rights movement. Advocates from across the nation joined in to support us here in Montana by flooding Senator Baucus' Washington D.C. office with hundreds of faxes in support of our actions and the Community Choice Act, prompting a complaint from the Senator’s office that they were being harassed. It’s unfortunate that the Senator’s staff view disability advocates, exercising our political rights in support of improving the lives and right to choose of thousands of low-income people with disabilities and seniors, as nothing more than a distraction from their day-to-day activities.

"Sen. Baucus has been adamantly opposed to including long-term care in health care reform," said Bob Liston, Board President at Summit Independent Living Center. “This is simply unacceptable because..."
Missoula County Caregivers Conference
In May the annual caregivers training included learning about a gentler way to treat people with Alzheimer’s and a number of other topics of interest. In July Lorna Palin and Mary Olson are co-facilitating an updated Personal Attendant Management Class at Summit. Contact Lorna for more information about future plans for an ongoing support group!

Diabetes and Chronic Kidney Disease
Kathy Boyer and Jude Monson are part of a statewide council to educate Montanans about these diagnoses. This project will provide a free screening in Missoula at the U of M on Saturday October 24, from 8 am to 2:30 pm. For more information or to register for screening contact Kathy.

Consumer Interviews
We are following up with the results of the feedback you gave us about some top needs in the Missoula area. Social gatherings and networking were at the top of the list. If you want to hear about times and places, contact Mary about upcoming events in Missoula.

Youth Transitions
Mike Beers, Darren Larson and Mary Olson have been at both Big Sky and Florence High Schools this spring to facilitate the Building Advocacy and Learning Leadership Skills (BALLS) class. If you would like this curriculum in your school this fall or winter, contact Mike. If you would like a Disability Awareness Panel in your school contact Mary or Darren.

LEAD ON
Mike Beers, Mary Olson and Mike Mayer have co-facilitated this disability history and leadership training this spring and summer. If you are interested in this training in the future contact Mary.

Women with a disability
Summit board member, Leanne Beers, offered a Self Esteem winter class with a follow up spring support group. If you would like to register for a new class contact Jude. The Women Be Healthy class for women with a developmental and or learning disability is starting on Tuesdays starting September 15 through November 10th. Andrea Dahl will co-facilitate this class with Angel Nordquist from Planned Parenthood. The class will be held at Summit. If interested contact Andrea.

Living Well & Working Well
Andrea and Darren have co-facilitated this class at the YMCA this spring. Nationally, both the Living Well curriculum and Working Well curriculum are in the process of being updated. If you are interested in taking the Living Well training at Summit or are in the process of finding work and/or are working and you want to figure out how to maintain your health by taking the Working Well training, contact Jude Monson.

SNAP is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly the Food Stamp Program), designed to help Montanans afford healthy food. New eligibility guidelines and income limits have made it easier than ever before to qualify!

Applying is easy! There are several ways to apply for SNAP:
You can apply at any Office of Public Assistance
• You can download an application and mail or fax it to any Office of Public Assistance (http://vhsp.dphhs.mt.gov/publicassistance/index.shtml)
• You can call the Office of Public Assistance and ask for a telephone interview
• You can have another adult apply on your behalf
• Applicants need to meet a Net Income Limit, which is calculated by a caseworker.

Questions?
The Montana Food Bank Network can help you fill out an application or answer questions about SNAP. Contact us at (800) 809-4752 or snap@mfbn.org.
The Community Living Assistant Services and Supports Act (CLASS) Act, which will give people with disabilities access to Long-Term Services and Supports by allowing individuals to purchase Long-Term Care Insurance from the Government, was marked up on July 7, 2009 by the U.S. Senate Health Employment Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee.

The CLASS Act will create a new national insurance program to help adults who have or develop functional limitations to remain independent, employed, and a part of their community. It is an important step in the evolution of public policy toward a new focus on helping individuals overcome barriers to independence that they may confront due to any functional limitations a person may experience as they age or because of the acquisition or onset of a disability.

The program would be supported by monthly premiums, which would vary with age but are expected to average about $65 per month. Students and people with incomes below the poverty line would pay only $5 per month and no one would be eligible for benefits until they have paid into the system for at least five years.

The bill's long-term care provision would provide a basic benefit of at least $50 a day -- indexed for inflation -- to help enrollees who need assistance in performing such daily activities as dressing, bathing and eating.

CCA Healthcare Rallies  Continued from Page 3

we are talking about people's lives here. Not only do people die waiting to get out of nursing homes, but when people are forced into nursing homes because of how Medicaid funding is now structured, they lose control over their lives, they lose their privacy, their freedom, they often lose their connections with family and friends, and their health deteriorates, which then costs more.”

Thank you to those of you around the entire state who came out to participate in the rallies and those of you who took the opportunity to call, fax, or email Senator Baucus to encourage him to include the Community Choice Act in Healthcare Reform. Without all of your hard work and dedication to ensuring the equality and independence of seniors and people with disabilities, we would not be making the progress that we are on this important issue.

Additional coverage of the July 2, 2009 Montana Community Choice Rallies can be seen on YouTube at:

Missoula Rally: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Qu4FUxSxO8
Helena Rally: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8szn26PR7K0

Pictures are available at: http://picasaweb.google.com/travis.hoffman10

To stay up to date on our quest to including the Community Choice Act in Healthcare Reform and for opportunities to contact our congressional leaders about these important topics, please join the Montana Independent Living Action Alert System by sending an email to: montana-il-action-alert-subscribe@googlegroups.com.
Change is happening at Summit as we are initiating workshops and training to educate, empower, and bring together individuals we serve. In Ravalli County, we are having regularly scheduled group orientation and training for those interested in learning more about Summit services, community resources, and Social Security benefits. By bringing a group together it will not only provide extensive information regarding Social Security disability benefits, eligibility requirements, and the application process, but it will give everyone the opportunity to connect with others, participate in other group activities, and move towards a stronger disability community. If you are interested, please give us a call at 363-5242 and we’ll put you on the roster for the next scheduled session.

The “LEAD ON” Workshop held on June 11th was a huge success, with the participants leaving wanting more of the same. They enjoyed the history, the interaction and connections they made with others in the group. We hope to organize another group activity sometime soon, so will keep you posted... The Summit booth at the Bitterroot Spring Fair was a huge success, as many people stopped by the booth and several signed up for the Living Well with a Disability Workshop. Peer Advocates, Deena Boyd and Susan Butchart, conducted the first Ravalli County Living Well Workshop this April and are planning to have another workshop this fall. This past school year, peers facilitated Disability Awareness Presentations at Darby, Hamilton, and Victor, and participated in the annual Disability Awareness Day at Daly Elementary.

Serenity, the Ravalli County Independent Living Specialist, stays very busy serving a host of consumers in securing benefits, resources, and services they may need, as well as facilitating skills training classes, participating in the Ravalli County Transition Coalition, and advocating on the behalf of individuals with disabilities for legislative change, accessible city parks, pathways, and other recreational sites. Serenity is a dynamic facilitator of educational workshops with the last training on “Building Relationships through Communication” receiving rave reviews by the participants. If you are interested in learning, we’d like to know your interests, so please let us hear from you.

Mary Millin, Bitterroot People First Aktion Club Advisor, and four People First members attended the Midwinter Kiwanis Conference in Billings in late February. It was a full agenda, with several good workshops and a report on the International Kiwanis Conference held in Illinois last summer. Attendees learned a lot, and made new friends. In March, Kelly Harris from the State Special Olympics office joined the Missoula and Bitterroot Aktion Clubs for a pizza party in Hamilton. Kelly talked about the role of Special Olympic volunteers and mentors for those who may not want to participate as an athlete. Members participated in the Special Olympics held in Bozeman the week of May 11th-15th, with Ravalli County participants taking several Gold & Silver Medals. In June, club members had a yard sale, invited prospective members to a fun barbecue, and participated in the Kiwanis Fishing Derby. Upcoming plans include nutrition classes, working at aid stations during the Bitterroot Land Trust bike ride, the Kiwanis pancake breakfast, the Kiwanis District Conference in Kalispell in August, and hope to arrange a get-together with four other Montana People First clubs before the end of the summer. As a community project, People First members continue to sort donated clothing to give to the children at the Bitterroot Attention Home.

Advocacy efforts for the expansion of public transportation remain constant. Joanne and Mary attended the Montana Transit Association Spring Conference held in Billings in April to get updates on national and statewide transit issues, network with providers of transit services, and advocate on the behalf of transportation dependent individuals to expand public transit systems. Currently, the Hamilton Growth Policy is in the process of being updated, as well as an update to the Hamilton Area Transportation Plan, both of which have given us the opportunity to advocate on the behalf of the disabled population for accessible parks, accessible sidewalks/pathways, and expanded public transportation services. Joanne has been appointed to serve on the Community Advisory Committee throughout the update to the Hamilton Area Transportation Plan, so let us hear your concerns regarding transportation as a whole... highways, byways, bridges, sidewalks, pathways, curb cuts, intersections, traffic lights, stop signs, etc., as well as public transportation needs.

Remember, knowledge is power, and there is power in numbers, so we encourage you to Learn and educate yourself, Empower yourself and others, Advocate for yourself and others, know your Disability rights, Organize, and Network... Use your abilities for the greater good and accept the responsibility of helping yourself, others, and the community as a whole... LEAD ON...
The Flathead County peers have done several disability awareness trainings since the first of the year. They have made visits to Muldown School in Whitefish, Kootenai Valley Christian School in Libby and the Yaak Elementary School. In March, the peers hosted their first Murder Mystery party, Murder at the Four Deuces, and everyone had a wonderful time. There were some great costumes and excellent acting throughout the evening. The Four Deuces Part 2 murder mystery is planned for this fall.

A new youth group called YODA has become very active in recent months. They have had bowling and fishing trips and have plans to advocate for greater transportation access in Flathead Valley.

In March, Flathead staff manned a booth at the Job Fair at Kalispell Center Mall. Summit has also had a presence at the monthly Inter-Agency Rapid Response fairs held at the old Gateway West Mall. These Rapid Response events are intended to provide easy one-stop access to a variety of services for individuals who are recently unemployed.

A Living Well workshop was held in March and April with 6 people attending. Dianna Kintzler, Kalispell IL Specialist, and Amanda Edwards, peer advocate, were the facilitators.

In May, Rob Gilkerson came to Kalispell to present an ADA training to Flathead peer advocates and other interested service people. It was an excellent training and several Flathead Peers learned how to do an ADA accessibility survey of public facilities.

Mary Olson and Mike Beers brought the first LEAD ON workshop to the Flathead on June 26th with nine people in attendance. This event was very helpful in bringing a greater understanding of the IL movement to consumers.

Kalispell disability and aging advocates also participated in the July 2nd statewide rallies to urge Senator Baucus to include the Community Choice Act in the current Healthcare Reform bill that is currently being drafted by the Senate Finance Committee, of which, Baucus is the Chair. Approximately 25 advocates gathered downtown at the Flathead County Courthouse where they were briefed by Summit’s Advocacy Coordinator, Travis Hoffman, about the Community Choice Act and why it, and ending the institutional bias in our current Medicaid system, is so crucial to include in Healthcare Reform. From the Courthouse, advocates marched their way to Senator Baucus’ office where they crowded inside to talk to his field representative and let her know that Montanans do care and we are voicing our concerns and we need to be listened to. The group delivered hundreds of “Keys to Community Choice” and requested that the senator include the Community Choice Act in Healthcare Reform.
In the last few months, Lake County peers have been busy with a number of outreach activities throughout the Mission Valley. The peers went to various communities to visit with business’, community health agencies, hospitals, as well as other service providers and individuals. They handed out flyers that provided information about Summit services and on the bottom of every flyer were ‘tear off’ tabs with Summit’s contact information should someone be interested in our services. This idea for outreach came from one of our peers, good job Mustang!

During the first three months of the year we had two peers working part time in the Ronan office on a number of activities including contacting most of the Lake County schools letting them know about the types of services Summit provides and checking to see if they were interested in having us come in to do any presentations. We are continuing to communicate with area schools and hope to have more collaboration with each of them in the future.

One of our peers has been hosting a cancer support group at the Ronan office. The group meets every second and fourth Tuesday. If you are interested in attending please give us a call.

The peers also attended the Empowerment Conference for Native Americans with Disabilities on April 2nd. On May 20th peers also attended a transportation conference in Pablo. At the conference they attended a customer panel session where they were able to give input on public transit based on their experiences and perspectives. Another consumer conference was held in Pablo on June 4th and was very well attended with 27 people, including peers, in attendance. Each of these two Pablo events were put on in collaboration with the Salish & Kootenai Tribes and the Tribal Voc. Rehab program.

In Sanders County we focused all of our energy on organizing and putting on the outdoor recreation event that was held at Pilgrim Creek Park in Noxon on July 10th. The event was a great success as over 20 people participated throughout the day. During the event we focused on issues such as accessible recreation opportunities and how Summit can be more available as a community resource as seen and needed by consumers.

The Sanders County Peers also set up a booth at the Plains Trade Fair this spring and they will continue to be a presence with the local Transportation Advisory Committee to ensure the needs of people with disabilities are addressed.

I hope you always consider us a valuable resource to offer guidance and assist you in meeting your needs and concerns. Feel free to give us a call any time a 1-866-230-6936 or at 1-406-676-0190.

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**Bulletin Board**

See our website at [www.summitilc.org](http://www.summitilc.org) for more ads

- **'88 Winnebago Superchief 27RQ**. Newer 454, roof A/C, genset, jacks, awning, Superarm wheelchair lift, hand controls, 190 W solar. $8,000 OBO. (406) 293-7467.

- **2005 Jazzy 1103 Ultra Power Wheelchair**. Paid $12,000 asking $6,000. Call 721-0671.

- **Various Items**: Everest & Jennings wheelchair $400; Power standing Recliner $200; 5" elevated toilet set $15; Bath bench $30; and many more. Call 406-251-4448.


- **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.

- **Quantum 1107 Power Wheelchair**. Brand new, never used. Paid $6200 for it, will sell for $2500. Call 406-728-2642.

- **Invacare Storm TDX 3 Power Wheelchair**. Purchased for $5500 will sell for $2800 OBO. Seat Size: width 18” - depth 16” - Delivery negotiable. Call (406) 752-6561.

- **Pride Revo 3 wheel scooter** purchased new 10/2004 for $1951. Has not been used since 9/2006. Adjustable seat, armrests, and steering column. Includes cover, front and rear baskets. Price: $750.00. Call (406) 544-8534 in the evenings or weekends.

- **Electric Mobility Scooter for sale** - Four wheel heavy duty model 305, 500 lb. capacity. Excellent condition, comes with trailer hitch mount electric lift. Cost $5000 new, asking $2000 or best offer. (406) 862-3960 or 862-2345.

- **Redman power standup wheelchair**. Large size 200-250lbs. Used for 4 months. $15,000 OBO. 903-434-9463

- **Light weight heavy duty manual wheelchair**. Used 2 months. Holds 425 lb weight. $500 OBO. Call (406) 270-2203.

Have something you want to sell or give away? Are you looking for a hard to find piece of equipment? If so, list it here by contacting Travis and list it on the Montech item exchange website at: [http://montech.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/mtdb/](http://montech.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/mtdb/)
The Montana Youth Leadership Forum’s (MYLF) 10th group of delegates and future advocates, 25 high school students with disabilities from all across the state, are participating in this year’s (July 13-17) Forum on the campus of Carol College in Helena. We’ll have more to report in our next newsletter.

Youth Opening doors through Advocacy (YODA) held its June meeting and are planning two very exciting meetings for July and August. The July meeting will be held on Thursday the 30th from 4:00pm-6:00pm at Westside Lanes and Fun Center. Absolutely no business will be done at this meeting, the only things on the Agenda are: Food, Bowling, Mini Golf, Video Games, and Food. The August meeting, however, will be all business... We’re going Fishin!! On the Friday the 14th of August in the afternoon at a private pond up Bass Creek (about 20mins down the Bitterroot). Montech will be there with all different kinds of adaptive fishing equipment and other outdoor toys for us to use. Since it is a private pond there is no need for a fishing license, you also don’t need to worry about bringing fishing equipment, but you’re welcome to if you have your own. We will also be having a cook out with plenty of food and drink.

Finally, the Second Annual Montana Youth Transitions Conference will be held in Butte at the War Bonnet Inn on October 6-9th. For more information on the MYTransitions Conference or to register, please visit http://www.montanayouthtransitions.org.

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