Summit Independent Living celebrated its 35th Anniversary in 2016. Since 1981 Summit has grown from a small, grass-roots organization to an active and highly respected community presence. Summit is a private, non-residential, non-profit organization that offers a wide range of services designed to provide people with disabilities the tools and resources they need to improve their independence, self-confidence, knowledge, skills and access to community resources. Summit serves people of all ages with any type of disability.

Headquartered in Missoula, Montana, Summit has branch offices in Kalispell, Ronan and Hamilton, and a separate location in Missoula that houses youth programs. The center has 26 core staff members, 33 part-time peer advocates, 6 part-time youth advisors, and over 270 personal assistants who provide personal care to consumers receiving Medicaid self-directed Community First Choice and HCBS waiver services.

Summit provides consumer and advocacy services to residents of Missoula, Ravalli, Mineral, Lake, Sanders, Flathead, and Lincoln Counties as well as works on a systemic level locally, nationally, and across Montana to improve the lives of individuals living with disabilities.

Summit provides the core independent living services, plus self-directed Medicaid Community First Choice and Personal Assistance Services, benefits planning (Social Security work incentives), benefits assistance, and vocational services. The most innovative of Summit's programs are our peer advocacy program, youth services, and advocacy and systems change efforts.

Summit’s extensive involvement in local and statewide advocacy and systems change efforts are focused primarily on the areas of transportation, housing, community access, long-term services and supports, youth transition resources, and employment opportunities. Summit’s advocacy coordinator manages an electronic action alert system to track state and national legislation of importance to people with disabilities and facilitates grassroots advocacy efforts across the state. Summit staff are actively involved in the leadership of statewide independent living task forces and a legislative advocacy committee.

We believe that people with disabilities have the right to control their own lives and enjoy the same opportunities as all other citizens.
The 2017 Montana Legislative Session is flying by. To begin with, we would like to take this opportunity thank everyone who has helped generate approximately 5000 emails to legislators and members of the Governor’s office in support of disability issues. If you are looking for ways to get involved, you can still join our action alert system by clicking the “Become an Advocate” on our website at www.summitilc.org.

Although the legislative session will be coming to a close in the near future, we still have much work left to do. Montanans with disabilities and older adults are currently stuck in the middle of a political battle between the Legislature and the Governor’s office. More specifically, the Legislature and the Governor’s office are currently at odds with how to fund services in the Senior and Long-Term Care Division (SLTC) of the Department of Public Health And Human Services that help individuals with disabilities and older adults perform the most basic of life’s tasks. At the beginning of the session, the legislature adopted a $42 million cut to the SLTC budget. Since then, the legislature approved federal spending authority to reinstate the cut that had been authorized, however, they did not appropriate the state funds that would be necessary for matching that federal spending authority. Instead, they are challenging the Governor’s office to reinstate $10 million that was taken out of DPHHS and transferred to the Department of Transportation. Services that are at risk of being slashed include the elimination of the Personal Assistance Services program, the elimination of Hospice, a 49% reduction of the Big Sky Waiver program, waiver slot reductions, between a 34% and a 45% reduction of the Community First Choice program, and others.

In other words, while the Legislature and the Governor’s office play politics, the lives of older adults and individuals with disabilities who rely on these services hang in the balance. Simply put, older adults and individuals with disabilities are being used as a political football with neither side, thus far, willing to do what is right.

In addition to the budget, there are several other pieces of legislation that Montana’s Centers for Independent Living have been following. They include:

**HB 70:** This bill would set up a committee to look at and update Montana’s guardianship laws as well as provides grants for voluntary guardianship training in order to better teach individuals how to provide guardianship services.

**HB 294:** This bill would appropriate $100,000 to be used as matching funds for municipalities and school districts to supplement local and private funds for incorporating accessibility features in new or existing playgrounds.

**HB 334:** This bill would require DPHHS to spend funds that are appropriated for Medicaid programs on only Medicaid programs and prohibit the Department from transferring these funds for other purposes.

**SB 208:** This bill would require DPHHS to spend funds that are appropriated for Medicaid Waiver services on only Medicaid Waiver services and prohibit the Department from transferring these funds for other purposes.

**SB 271:** This bill would extend the closure of the Montana Developmental Center in Boulder by two additional years without keeping the facility open indefinitely.

**SB 305:** This bill would allow County election administrators the opportunity to conduct the upcoming special election to fill Montana’s lone House of Representatives seat via a mail election rather than a costly poll election.

The above bills are ones that Montana’s Centers for Independent Living fully support and that are still making their way through the legislative process.

The following bills are bills that are still making their way to the legislative process but that Montana’s Centers for Independent Living oppose:

**HB 3:** This bill has passed and directs the Governor’s office to cut at least $10 million from the current funding cycle, including $5 million from DPHHS.

**HB 17:** While we support a portion of this bill that provides additional waiver slots for the Big Sky Waiver program, we oppose the portion of this bill that provides a provider rate increase for only one service under the waiver program. We believe that any provider rate increase should encompass all services available under the waiver program, not just assisted living services.

**HB 357:** This bill is dead but would have restricted the type of identification that an eligible voter may be able to use while registering to vote or while voting.

**HB 364:** This bill would implement a fine for individuals who fraudulently represent a dog they are trying to take into a business as a service dog when it is not a service dog. Montana’s Centers for Independent Living are opposed to this bill due to there not being a process by which service dogs may be certified. Due to the lack of a certification process, it would be virtually impossible for anyone to determine whether or not a dog that someone claims is a service dog is actually not a service dog.

Keep helping us make a difference!
Kwanele Ngema, Independent Living Specialist, Hamilton

Summit is excited to welcome new staff member Kwanele Ngema to our ranks! Kwanele transferred from Johannesburg, South Africa about five years ago and has settled in the Bitterroot Valley. He most recently worked as Employment Specialist with Ravalli Services Corporation and has now been hired as Independent Living Specialist at Summit Independent Living Center in our Hamilton, Montana office.

Mr. Ngema is also currently enrolled at the University of Montana and keeps himself very busy outside of work and school. He participates in many activities, including indoor and outdoor soccer, skiing, pedal bicycle riding, and running from one town to another in the Bitterroot Valley. Kwanele also rides Super Sport motorcycle on a private racetrack during summertime.

Kwanele has expressed his excitement about joining the Summit IL team and has many ideas to share with the organization. He is a very passionate person and continues to express his love for humanity. Kwanele plans on investing his energy, time, and creativity with Summit ILC and its consumers.

Welcome to Summit, Kwanele! We are excited to have you on our team and look forward to your contributions to consumers and our efforts.

Community Services In Jeopardy

In addition to what is happening on the state level in regards to community services that individuals with disabilities and older adults rely on, such services are also at risk as Congress moves forward with dismantling the Affordable Care Act on the federal level. The new Affordable Health Care Act could be devastating for individuals who rely on personal assistance services as the bill, in its current form, would sunset the Community First Choice program, which enables individuals with disabilities and older adults to live in freedom in the community. The elimination of this program, in conjunction with what could happen on the state level with the elimination of the Personal Assistance Services program, would force many individuals into institutional care settings as there would be no program left that would provide in-home personal assistance services.

We urge you to join us in fighting against the elimination of essential services for individuals with disabilities and older adults. We have fought far too long for the right to receive services and live in the community as equal citizens! **We must not go backwards!**

This publication is available in alternative format on request. Please call 1 (800) 398-9002.
Over the past year, Summit’s advocacy coordinator, Travis Hoffman, has been busy working with the Missoula City Council and the Missoula Parking Commission to increase access to accessible parking at businesses throughout Missoula as well as in the downtown Missoula area.

In December 2016, the Missoula City Council adopted a change to the city’s parking ordinance that makes it clear to business owners that when they reseal, restripe, or refurbish their parking lots that they need to bring their accessible parking spaces into compliance with current accessibility standards, which are the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. Bringing parking lots into compliance with current accessibility standards has long been required. However, many businesses fail to do so and instead, routinely keep restriping over existing stripes that fail to have adequate spacing to be compliant with accessibility standards for accessible parking. To ensure this ordinance is enforced, any business that is found to be in violation of the ordinance once they have altered their parking lot in any way may be subject to a fine if the violation is not corrected within a 60 days of notification of the violation.

In Missoula’s downtown area, the Missoula Parking Commission implemented a new parking meter system called multi-space parking meter kiosks in December, 2015. The way the parking kiosks work is when an individual parks in the downtown area, individuals proceed to the kiosk nearest to them, or on route to where they are going, enter their license plate number, select how much time they are purchasing, and either pay with cash or by credit/debit/or Downtown gift card. While this system works well for individuals without disabilities, many individuals with mobility limitations have found the new kiosks quite difficult and even impossible to use. Individuals who have a difficult time walking long distances have also found the kiosks inconvenient.

To tackle these barriers, Summit worked with the Missoula Parking Commission to re-implement a two-hour free parking time limit for individuals who utilize an accessible parking placard or license plate until such a time that the new system can be made accessible. As a part of this process, Summit worked closely with the Parking Commission to explore the possibility of implementing a pay-by-phone system. After many thorough discussions, we are happy to announce that the new parking pay by phone system was implemented in downtown Missoula on February 24, 2017. While the new pay by phone system serves as a convenient mode of payment for anyone who parks downtown, it is especially convenient for individuals with disabilities and older adults who find using the parking kiosks difficult or impossible. The new pay by phone application is called PassportParking and can be downloaded for free from the Apple Store and Google Play. The app is also available in a desktop version which can be accessed at: https://ppprk.com/park/, for users who do not have access to an Android or IPhone but do have access to the internet via other means.

If the new pay-by-phone system has shown to address the accessibility barriers to drivers with disabilities, the Missoula Parking Commission Board of Directors may vote once again to eliminate the two-hour free parking limit for individuals who have an accessibility parking placard or license plate. If the Missoula Parking Commission Board of Directors chooses to do so, it would mean that individuals who use an accessible parking placard or license plate would pay the same amount in parking fees as anyone who does not use such a placard or license plate. Summit Independent Living would not oppose this move by the Missoula Parking Commission as long as parking and the method in which drivers pay for such parking is fully accessible to and usable by drivers with disabilities.

Summit is also working closely with Missoula Development Services and the Missoula Parking Commission to begin to address the significant shortage of accessible parking spaces in the downtown area. The Missoula Parking Commission has recently brought on an intern to work on putting together a GIS map of the downtown area that would take inventory of existing parking, including an inventory of accessible parking spaces. The data within this GIS map would also include information on existing accessible parking deficiencies so that it can be used to bring parking in the downtown area into compliance with current accessibility standards. The information will also help city planners determine how many additional accessible parking spaces are required in the downtown area and where those parking spaces should be located.
BASE IS A COMMUNITY CENTER AIMED AT ENRICHING LIFE THROUGH THE ARTS AS WELL AS ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS IN THE PURSUIT OF FUN, EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND INTERDEPENDENCE.

BASE SHOWCASE

BASE Showcase will be held at BASE (725 W Alder) on April 7th from 6 - 8 p.m.

Want to perform: If you want to perform Stand up comedy, poetry, music or Improv. Please contact Summit at 728-1630 ext. 161

What will happen at the Show:
- Featured artist International Photographer Richard Kasden 5-6:30pm
- Live performances: Comedy, poetry, music, Improv 6:30-8pm
- Light snacks & local brewed Kombucha served through out

If you would like to watch and support us, come to BASE on April 7th at 6 pm!

BASE EVENTS

Game Night (GN) - Thursdays weekly, 2 p.m.- 6 p.m.
Youth Opening Doors through Advocacy (YODA) - 2nd & 4th Wed monthly, 3:30p.m. - 6 p.m.
Base Art Group (BAG) - Fridays weekly, 1p.m. - 5 p.m.
Adaptive Yoga - Wednesdays 4:15 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.
BASE Improv - Thursdays 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Programs at BASE are open to everyone – all ages and all abilities.

For more information visit www.basemissoula.org
Upcoming Events & Classes

Missoula
700 SW Higgins, Suite 101

Missoula Office Closed
- July 3, 4

Summit Orientation
- First Friday monthly, 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.

SSA Orientation
- Apr 14, May 12, Jun 9, Jul 14 from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.
- Apr 25, May 23, Jun 20, Jul 25 from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.

People First
- Apr 5 & 14, May 3 & 17, Jun 7 & 21, Jul 5 & 19 4 p.m.- 5 p.m.

Communication Assertiveness
- Apr 24 - Jun 19, Mondays weekly 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.

Living Well with a Disability
- Apr 24 - Jun 26, Mondays weekly 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

Work Soft Skills
- Apr 13 - May 4 Thursdays weekly, 10 a.m-12 p.m.

Alzheimer’s Support Group
- Second Wednesday monthly, 12 p.m. - 2 p.m.

Blind Low Vision Support Group
- Second Tuesday monthly, 1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Epilepsy Support Group
- First Monday monthly, 2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Unless otherwise noted, classes and groups meet at Summit’s Conference Room
700 SW Higgins, Suite 101, Missoula
Call Kathy, (406) 728-1630, for more information or to register.

Ronan
124 Main St.

Ronan Office Closed
- July 3, 4

Communication & Assertiveness Class
- Thursdays weekly, 11 a.m.- 1 p.m.

Beginners Yoga
- Thursdays weekly, 1 p.m. - 2 p.m.

Activities (arts, crafts, card/board games, darts, foosball, movies)
- Thursdays weekly, 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Hot Soup and Bread
- Thursdays Weekly, Hot by 12 p.m. (Please take part in activity)
Upcoming Events & Classes

KALISPELL
1203 Highway 2W, #35

Kalispell Office Closed
- July 3, 4

Social Security Orientation
- Second and fourth Wednesdays monthly.
  Please call 257-0048 ext. 141, to register and get location.

Youth Opening Doors through Advocacy (YODA)
- Youth group meets once a month.

Living Well with a Disability
- Call Lynae to sign up.

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.

HAMILTON
299 Fairgrounds Road #4

Hamilton Office Closed
- July 3, 4

Social Security Orientations
- First Tuesday Monthly 1p.m.- 3p.m.
- Please call the Hamilton office at 363-5242 to sign up

Man Cave Cookout
- Beginning spring/summer, Third Thursday monthly

People First
- Tuesdays weekly, 3 p.m.- 4 p.m.

Women on the Move
- Third Wednesday monthly, 1 p.m.- 3 p.m.

TGIAD - Thank Goodness It's Activity Day
- Fridays, 1 p.m.- 3 p.m.

Unless otherwise noted, classes and groups meet at:
The Refuge, 317 N 3rd St., Hamilton
Call Becky or Mary, (406) 363-5242, for more information or to register.

Summit Board

Steve Hackler  Mark Cash
Molly Blair  Joe Stone
Jenny Montgomery  Meg Whicher
Randy Morigeau  Suzanne Meikle
Are you living on a fixed income that doesn’t always leave enough for food? You may be eligible for SNAP! The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP – is designed to help Montana seniors keep food on the table while allowing them to make ends meet. Every day, 10,000 Baby Boomers are turning 65. With more and more Montanans like yourself retiring and living on a fixed income, the threat of food insecurity (not having enough nutritious food to eat) increases. Fixed incomes leave little money to spare for any unexpected expenses such as home repairs, medical visits, or vet bills.

SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, actively improves your nutrition quality and overall health. Inadequate nutrition can lead to health problems like diabetes, osteoporosis, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and more. SNAP helps ensure that you’re able afford the fruits, vegetables and protein needed to stay healthy and have a balanced diet. SNAP can help you form a strong foundation of health by improving the kinds of food you are able to buy. Having a little extra money for food also means you have more money to put towards filling your prescriptions or paying the heat bill.

SNAP is easy to use, too. Monthly benefits are loaded onto an EBT card which is used like a debit card to make food purchases at grocery stores and even some farmer’s markets.

To learn more about SNAP or to apply over the phone, call Elizabeth from the Montana Food Bank Network at (406) 239-6475. If the phone is not to your liking, stop by any Office of Public Assistance and complete the application in person. SNAP…an easy solution to help you with your grocery bills!

Elizabeth Weaver, SNAP Outreach Coordinator, Montana Food Bank Network