The 2019 Montana Legislature has been nothing short of a roller-coaster ride for disability advocates. It has been frustrating at times with many worthwhile and important bills going down in flames and it has been exciting at times with some good bills getting passed or still making their way through the legislative process. Many of the deals made during this legislative session were behind closed doors and lacked transparency and meaningful input by advocates.

Summit and Montana’s Centers for Independent Living would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped advocate on behalf of Montanans with disabilities. This far into the legislative session we have been able to mobilize 480 disability advocates who have sent 6345 emails to legislators in support of legislation to improve the lives of people with disabilities. If you are looking for ways to get involved, the Montana Centers for Independent Living Action Alert listserv is always accepting new advocates. To join the MTCIL Action Alert listserv and receive action alerts in your email inbox, please visit our website at https://www.summitilc.org and click the blue “Become an Advocate” button about halfway down on the front page.

Even though the 2019 legislative session will be coming to a close here in the near future, we still have much work left to do. The following is an update on several key pieces of legislation important to people with disabilities:

**HB 2:** This is the budget bill. Contained within the human services portion of this bill remains a nearly $15 million reduction to the Big Sky Waiver program and a nearly $8 million reduction to Medicaid core services that were originally proposed by Gov. Bullock. We do not know how these reductions will affect community services in the next biennium but we will keep a close eye on them and advocate that no services be reduced. On the brighter side, the legislature has added $1 million to fund 100 waiver slots in the Big Sky Waiver program, $800,000 for the Extended Employment program, and passed small provider rate increases of .91% for FY 2020 and 1.83% for FY 2021 for nearly all providers providing Medicaid services, Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living, along with other funding increases.

**HJ 3:** This bill, which was a resolution to call for an interim study on voting accessibility for disabled electors, passed both chambers of the legislature and has been filed with the Secretary of State.

**HB 16:** This bill would allow the Montana Board of Housing to administer $15 million from the coal tax trust fund for the purpose of providing loans to increase the

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Missoula County - Main Office

Things are rolling along in Summit’s Main Office in Missoula, and we’re eager for more sunshiny spring days! Spring classes are underway with Living Well, WRAP, and Independence & Gratitude in session and Working Well starting in May. Please see the schedule elsewhere in the newsletter, and help us spread the word for more participation. The strength of these classes comes from what participants bring to them!

Some Main Office staff, peer advocates, and others have been busily involved with the current Montana legislative session. We have been sending out Action Alerts to inform people and help them participate in the legislative process. Join the Action Alert system on Summit’s website to stay informed, become active, and let your representatives know your preferences.

The Main Office has received a couple referrals for and we have begun youth Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) doing job shadows and work experiences. It’s exciting to see these transition-aged students being introduced to adult life!

Planning is underway for Summit’s annual ADA picnic in Missoula July 9 from 12 PM-late afternoon at the Meadowlark Shelter of Fort Missoula Regional Park. We will again have picnic food, adaptive cycling with community partners, games, and fun. Mark your calendar, plan to join us, and watch for more upcoming details.

Save the Date

2019 ADA Community Picnic
and Adaptive Recreation Clinic

July 9, 2019

Fort Missolula Regional Park
Meadowlark Shelter
off of South Ave., just inside the main gate

ADA Picnic
12:00pm -3:00pm

Adaptive Recreation Clinic
9:00am-5:00pm

For more information contact Summit at 728-1630
Ravalli County

Summit’s Hamilton office has launched our first spring semester class at Hamilton High School intended primarily for freshman and sophomore students. Anna Barnes is taking the lead on facilitating the class which includes information about Self-Advocacy, Soft Skills and Job Exploration. Other organizations such as Suicide Prevention educators, Vocational Rehabilitation, Job Corp and other local employment agencies will do presentations in the class. To help students make informed career choices, one goal of the class is to help provide work-based learning experiences. Hamilton Summit has had a great start working with Hamilton High School, again showing that good relationships are key to collaboration and growth.

Flathead County

Hello from the Flathead office of Summit Independent Living!

While it’s been a tough winter, we see sunshine ahead! Some of our upcoming activities for Spring 2019 include: Ongoing classes that will address several requested health topics; the 2019 Real Life Fair in May for students preparing to transition; and more fun activities for our Youth Opening Doors Through Advocacy (YODA, ages 14-25) group to take part in. We will also be scheduling some other classes starting in May. Also, don’t forget that we’ll have our 2nd annual picnic this summer so stay tuned for more information! To learn more, call our office at (406)257-0048 or check out our online calendar at http://www.summitilc.org/calendar/.

Please see the attached picture of one of the latest YODA activities: Wild Wings Recovery presented and spoke about the injured birds they help. They brought 5 different birds to show and gave some interesting information about each of them.

We are also excited to welcome a new employee, Peter Pelchen, who started working with us in January as an Independent Living Specialist (see his intro elsewhere in this newsletter). We are excited to have him join our Flathead team!
New Summit Staff

Peter Pelchen, Independent Living Specialist, Kalispell

My origins start in Wisconsin - in Yoda language, “A Cheesehead am I.” My grandfather was a cheesemaker and I’ve coined the phrase “I never met a cheese I didn’t like.” We came to Montana via England where my wife and I spent the first five years of our marriage – she’s a Brit, eh? Raising our family (3 girls, God bless ‘em) has been one of the greatest adventures of our lives. Whether camping at Tally Lake, making winter trips to the North Fork, waving flags at the 4th of July parade in Bigfork, swimming in Flathead Lake near Somers where we lived in an old farmhouse for 13 years, or spring bicycling in Glacier Park, our journey has consistently been framed in picture postcard-type of settings for which we are so grateful.

One huge chapter of our lives (wife, girls and I), was birthing the vision for opening a group home for adults with disabilities here in the Flathead. This came about during our years living near Somers. From a bare patch of earth near that old farm house on the forty acres of donated prime farm land, the 8,000 square foot, 13 bedroom, 5 ½ bath, state-of-the-art home rose up by way various contributions of cash, donated materials and volunteer help. When the home, called Lighthouse, opened it was completely paid for – an astonishing fact I can only attribute to the hundreds of people who supported us throughout those early years! Since leaving that exciting project I have continued working with children and adults with disabilities but wearing slightly different hats.

I consider it a joy and a privilege to work in the field of disability. I’m equally pleased to be on board with Summit and look forward to meeting each of you and hearing some tales of your journey!

Donna Graham, Independent Living Specialist, Missoula

Donna Graham has joined the Summit team this year! Donna works as an Independent Living Specialist in Summit’s Missoula office.

Donna is a graduate from the University of Montana with her Bachelors degree in Social Work, and a minor in Early Childhood education. She has extensive experience working with Families and children.

Donna values the dignity of every individual and has a passion for advocacy. In her free time, she enjoys spending time in the outdoors hiking, biking, and river rafting with her family and friends.
Continued from Page 1...

development and preservation of affordable housing throughout Montana. HB 16 has passed both chambers of the legislature but has been referred back to the House with Senate amendments.

HB 88, HB 288, and HB 207: These three bills all relate to the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) program. HB 88 and HB 207 passed both chambers of the legislature and have each been signed by the Governor while HB 288 seems to be headed for approval as well. Each of these bills enhances Montana’s ABLE program in various ways such as opening the program up for individuals from out of state, allowing state tax refunds to be direct deposited in ABLE accounts, adding an individual with a disability to the ABLE advisory committee, and expanding who may be able to claim a tax credit for contributing to an ABLE account.

HB 529: This bill will require the Department of Public Health and Human Services to establish Medicaid Waiver waiting list policies and procedures in administrative rule so that they are subject to the public administrative rule process any time the state may want to change them. This bill has passed both chambers of the legislature and is headed to the Governor’s desk for signature.

SB 291: This bill changes some language in Montana’s election laws in order to pave the way for the Secretary of State’s office to be able to upgrade existing AutoMark voting machines with newer technology. SB 291 is on its way to passing the legislature and becoming law.

While the bills listed above have or are on their way to passing, the following bills, unfortunately, have decidedly met a much different fate.

HB 470: This bill would have updated Montana’s accessible parking laws by bringing the definition of what constitutes an accessible parking space up to date in order for law enforcement officials to better be able to enforce against people who park illegally in accessible parking spaces. Unfortunately, this bill was tabled after its first hearing in the House Judiciary Committee.

HB 468: This bill would have required certain state agencies to work together in developing a plan for moving employees with disabilities from subminimum wage employment into integrated employment programs. This bill was tabled in the House Business and Labor Committee.

HB 424: This bill would have allowed habilitative services to be covered under regular Medicaid plans. This bill was tabled in the House Human Services Committee.

HB 659: This bill would have established penalties for individuals who harm, or whose animals harm or cause the death of a service animal. This bill was tabled in the House Judiciary Committee.

Some decent legislation has passed during this legislative session and we should indeed celebrate what we have been able to accomplish. It is unfortunate that some of our key pieces of legislation, namely HB 470 and HB 659, did not really receive the recognition or consideration they both deserved.

Despite this up-and-down session, work towards getting these and other key pieces of legislation passed during the 2021 Legislative Session begins now. We will need all hands on deck over the next two years to ensure that the disability voice is heard, not only by making sure people with disabilities vote during the 2020 election but by also ensuring that candidates and lawmakers continually receive information on issues that affect and are important to Montanans with disabilities.

We hope you will join us on this journey so that we can all keep making a difference!
New Programs are coming to Summit’s BASE location!! This Month we are adding three new programs beginning Wednesday, April 10 with an all-abilities and all-skills Musical Exploration Group 5:45 PM-7:15 PM. The wide variety of instrumental, vocal, and improvisational skills will help everyone find something fun, familiar, unfamiliar, challenging, and/or boring – maybe all at once! Anyone is welcome to participate or just watch and enjoy the activity.

All Abilities Dance Class is back at BASE every Tuesday 6:30 PM-7:30 PM! Every Body Dance: Dance for all abilities! Your movement is special, fun, and healing! Come dance with us in a comfortable and friendly atmosphere.

Check out the new creative writing group beginning on Fridays from 5 PM-7 PM! This will be a stress-free environment to talk about and work on writing, workshop ideas, and to receive constructive feedback on previous or ongoing works. All types of genres are 100% welcome and appreciated. Be ready to learn, have fun, and to write!

As always, all BASE activities are FREE and open to everyone! There are still plenty of other activities including Yoga, Art, Improv and Game Night!!

An exciting new program called Empower Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) is coming to Missoula for the first time this summer! You don’t have to live in Missoula to participate by coming to visit, so please inform anyone you think might be interested in being involved – friends, coworkers, family! In collaboration with the UM Physical Therapy program, Empower SCI is offering a camp in Missoula similar to what they have been doing on the East Coast. Participants and volunteers have had awesome experiences and seen improvements in participants’ functional ability. In addition, it’s a great time to learn and try new things, connect with others, and contribute your talents to their experiences.

The goal of Empower SCI is to help individuals who have spinal cord injuries identify a specific goal to achieve, target that goal during the camp with experienced therapists and staff, and come away from the camp with greater functional ability and independence. In short, this is an opportunity to work on things you might not have achieved during your original injury rehab experience or since then.

Empower SCI Missoula will take place June 9-15, 2019 on the University of Montana campus and around Missoula. There are scholarships available, so learn more and apply by going to the following link: https://www.empowersci.org/

Please also forward this email to anyone you know who might want to be involved in any of the following roles:
- Participant with SCI
- Clinical Specialist (nurse, PT, PTA, OT, OTA, RT, rehab counselor)
- Peer Mentor
- Residential Aide

If you have further questions, please reach out to the Empower SCI President and Co-Founder below. Hopefully you come hang out in Missoula for a couple weeks this summer!

Carrie Callahan, PT, ATP
President and Co-Founder of Empower Spinal Cord Injury, Inc
www.empowersci.org
Phone: 315.427.2504
BASE stands for home base, like in hide and go seek. In life, you have to establish a BASE first, that’s where we come in.

Game Night (GN)
- Thursdays weekly, 2 p.m.–6 p.m.

Youth Opening Doors through Advocacy (YODA)
- 2nd & 4th Tues. monthly, 4p.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.

For schedule updates and additional events go to www.summitilc.org/calendar

To donate to BASE go to:
www.basemissoula.org
phone: 406–215–1080

To get involved or to share ideas of new BASE programs, contact BASE jhoward@summitilc.org
or by visiting www.basemissoula.org

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CLASSIFIED ADS

*2001 VMI Ford Windstar WheelChair Accessible Van
White exterior & grey interior, new alternator and battery, remote start, 2 sets of tires, 109,000 miles. $11,500.00
Call Jessica 406-253-9663

Smart Talker text scanner
Slightly used, $750. Contact Larry at 406-633-4036 or ketch1969@gmail.com

Nova Walker, Quontum 600 power wheelchair, Hurricane Mobility Scooter, Commode, 2 Transfer Benches, Beezy Manual Wheelchair
call Gary 224-5527

WheelChair Accessible Duplex
For Rent - Brand new, 3 bedroom 2 bath, roll in shower, $1400/mo. Call Glenn 544-1361.

Symmetry Stander
Call Madison (406) 670-9388

Braun Vangater Wheelchair Lift
Almost new wheelchair lift with 600 LB capacity. $2000 OBO. Call or text Tyler 406-925-9846

Garaventa Super-Trac Portable Wheelchair Lift for stairs. Purchased new for $12,000 and used only a few times. Will sell for $2,500 OBO. Contact Jacob Francom, Troy Public Schools, jfrancom@troyk12.org, (406) 295-4520.

Acorn Stair lift
For going up to 6 stairs while seated. $500 OBO. Call John at 546-7003.

To get listed contact Tyler Stosich at (406) 728-1630 or email tstosich@summitilc.org.

Or, list and find items on the MonTECH exchange:
http://montech.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/mtdb/

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THE SUMMIT INDEPENDENT
April 2019

What Is the All of Us Research Program?

All of Us is a new research program from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The goal is to advance precision medicine. Precision medicine is health care that is based on you as an individual. It takes into account factors like where you live, what you do, and your family health history. Precision medicine’s goal is to be able to tell people the best ways to stay healthy.

For more information go to: www.joinallofus.org

You can always sign up to get this newsletter by email by contacting: missoula@summitilc.org