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Remembering Michael Mayer 1956-2021

Leadership Personified

As we say goodbye to 2021 and march forward into a new year, Summit and the Montana independent living community does so with a heavy heart. The past year has been a difficult one, not just because we continue to endure the COVID-19 pandemic, but because of the loss of two of our friends, colleagues, and leaders. Since the passing of Chris Clasby in the spring of 2021, Summit was once again dealt a blow with the passing of our longtime Executive Director Michael Mayer, on November 24, 2021.

Mike worked as the Executive Director of Summit Independent Living since 1988, 33 years, forming Summit into the robust community organization it is today. Not only did Mike believe fully in the philosophy of independent living, that disability is a natural part of life and that people with disabilities should be in control of their own lives and be free to make their own choices in the same way that people without disabilities do, he exemplified it. In Mike's own words: "My life philosophy has changed so much over the years. I've come to realize that we do have control over our lives. I know that sounds strange from somebody sitting in a wheelchair. I've learned that if you make up your mind, you can do a lot of things, it just might not be in the way you had originally envisioned doing them." Under Mike's leadership and passion for independent living, the same philosophy that has driven Summit since its founding, will continue to drive our mission to advance the independence and civil rights of people with disabilities.

Mike will be remembered not only for his exceptional leadership and passion for independent living, or for his love of all things Griz, but for his courage, kindness, and wisdom. Mike lived an extraordinary life and was a great example to us all, he was a leader and advocate for people with disabilities not only at Summit but throughout Montana. Because of his commitment

to leaving the world a better place than he found it, Summit fulfilled its mission and flourished under his leadership. Mike certainly earned his place in Montana IL history. He will be greatly missed, may he Rest In Power!

Mike's latest goal for Summit was to embark on a \$3.5 million capital campaign ending in the construction of a universally accessible, innovative, and welcoming building located at 145 S. Russell St. in Missoula that Summit can call home. Mike's vision for this new Summit office was one that serves as a model of inclusion and a community space where all are welcome. A space that provides a more comfortable, modern, and humanizing experience for the individuals we serve and a space that enables Summit and our allies the ability to continue to build upon our work towards improving the independence, economic opportunity, and quality of life for all people with disabilities.

In continuing Mike's legacy towards making independent living in Montana a reality for generations to come, Mike's family requests that in lieu of flowers, any remembrances for Mike be made in the form of contributions to Summit Independent Living to support their capital campaign and help complete Mike's vision of a new forever home for Summit. Donations can be made online at www.summitilc.org/donate or can be mailed or dropped off at Summit's current office located at 700 SW Higgins, Suite 101, Missoula, MT 59803.

Mike's obituary can be viewed at: <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/missoulain/name/michael-mayer-obituary>

REST IN POWER

2022 SOCIAL SECURITY CHANGES

Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA):

Based on the increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI-W) from the third quarter of 2020 through the third quarter of 2021, Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries will receive a 5.9 percent COLA for 2022.

Social Security Disability Thresholds

Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA):

	2021	2022
Non-Blind	\$1,310/mo.	\$1,350/mo.
Blind	\$2,190/mo.	\$2,260/mo.

Trial Work Period (TWP)

\$ 940/mo.	\$ 970/mo.
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SSI Federal Payment Standard:

Individual	\$ 794/mo.	\$ 841/mo.
Couple	\$1,191/mo.	\$1,261/mo.

SSI Resource Limits:

Individual	\$2,000	\$2,000
Couple	\$3,000	\$3,000



Montana's Medicaid Medically Needy Income Limit to Increase

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) announced that Montanans who qualify for Medicaid through the Medically Needy Program will see an increase in the amount of monthly income they get to keep each month to cover living expenses. The program allows for Medicaid coverage for aged, blind, disabled, pregnant women, and children whose income exceeds the income limits of Medicaid, but have significant medical expenses.

Through the Medically Needy Program, individuals can qualify for Medicaid benefits through a process known as a "spend down." Individuals can "spend down" their income, either through paid medical expenses, a cash payment to DPHHS, or a combination of the two, to get their income level low enough to meet Medicaid eligibility standards.

Starting in January 2022, Montana's Medicaid Medically Needy income limit will increase by \$169 per month. Since 2008, Montana's Medically Needy income limit has been set at \$645, after a \$20 general income exclusion and an additional \$100 income exclusion passed by the 2007 Montana Legislature. With this additional \$169 income exclusion, passed by the 2021 Montana Legislature, the Medically Needy income limit will now be \$814.

UPDATE: Montana Medicaid Medically Needy Income Limit

\$1,250 INCOME		PREVIOUS
\$645	\$605	SARA'S INCOME: \$1,250
OLD LIMIT	PAYMENT	MEDICALLY NEEDED INCOME LIMIT: \$645
		SARA'S PAYMENT: \$605

Previously, the Montana Medicaid Medically Needy income limit was \$645. In this example, if Sara received \$1,250 per month in Social Security benefits, in order to qualify for Medicaid she would have paid (or "spent down") \$605 per month toward the cost of her health care to meet Medicaid eligibility criteria.

\$1,250 INCOME		JANUARY 2022
\$814	\$436	SARA'S INCOME: \$1,250
NEW LIMIT	PAYMENT	MEDICALLY NEEDED INCOME LIMIT: \$814
		SARA'S PAYMENT: \$436

With the changes beginning January 1, 2022, Sara will see her \$605 monthly contribution decreased to \$436, providing Sara more resources to pay for her daily expenses.



GIVING TUESDAY

2021 marked the first time Summit Independent Living has participated in the worldwide *Giving Tuesday* day of giving event. If you aren't aware, *Giving Tuesday* is an international day of giving on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving/Black Friday. Thousands of nonprofit organizations from around the globe are encouraged to create and implement their own *Giving Tuesday* campaigns on this day. For more information, check out www.givingtuesday.org.

For our first *Giving Tuesday*, Summit decided to take to social media and use the hashtag **#ReachYourSummitMT** as the title and theme of our fundraising campaign. This is a nod to the title of Summit's capital campaign, **Reach Your Summit**. The goal of the campaign was for participants to take a picture of themselves taking on and accomplishing a challenge unique to them. They would then post their picture of them doing so to their favorite social media site using the hashtags **#ReachYourSummitMT** and **#GivingTuesday2021**. From there, participants were encouraged to donate to Summit's capital campaign via our website and dare their friends to *Reach Their Own Summit* and take on their own challenges.

This first year, Summit raised \$765 during the one-day *Giving Tuesday* campaign. Although this may seem like a drop in the bucket, this number was reached with no additional funding toward

advertising, and relied on word-of-mouth only. It's exciting to see our community showing their support for Summit and our services, and we hope to see this number continue to grow with each passing *Giving Tuesday*.

To keep up our momentum and to continue building awareness of Summit and the different challenges people with disabilities face, we want to make the **#ReachYourSummitMT** a regular social media practice for Summit and our supporters. We challenge you all to **Reach Your Summit** and take on a challenge, such as climbing Mt. Sentinel, or simply getting out of bed on time (a personal challenge for myself), and post about it on social media using the **#ReachYourSummitMT** hashtag, then get your friends and family involved. And as always, don't forget to help Summit in our own challenge to build our future and permanent home on Russell Street!

Look out for unique donor opportunities on May 5-6, 2022 for Missoula Gives (more information to follow in our April newsletter).

Thank You,
Madison



MISSOULAGIVES



SUMMIT BOARD

Mark Cash
Jenny Montgomery
Susanne Meikle
Molly Blair

Peter Drakos
Michelle McLane
Kelly Sellars
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Missoula County

Interim Executive Director

Travis Hoffman

Program Support Specialist

Mike Giddings

SD-CFC/PAS Program Manager/HR

Beth Anderson

SD-CFC/PAS Coordinator

Patti Montgomery-Stewart

SD-CFC/PAS Coordinator

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SD-CFC/PAS Assistant/Insurance

Jessica Workman

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Vacant

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Youth Coordinator

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John Howard

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Administrative Assistant

Laurie Swanson

Financial Officer

Scott Fels

Accounting Assistant

Jon Vivas

Flathead County



Coordinator

Lynae West

Independent Living Specialist

Dianna Kintzler

Independent Living Specialist

Vacant

SD-CFC/PAS Specialist

Aleyna Raymond

Ravalli County

Coordinator

Becky Fleming-Siebenaler

Independent Living Specialist

Vacant

People First Advisor/IL Specialist

Mary Millin

Lake County

Coordinator

Susan Morris

Independent Living Specialist

Mariah Armstrong

Summit Independent Living Awarded Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation Grant

Summit Independent Living is excited to announce that we have been awarded a Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation Priority Quality of Life Grant. The funded project, "Promoting Fun and Friendship in the Time of COVID-19," will focus on addressing the negative impacts of social isolation and loneliness that people living with paralysis, their families and caregivers, and others with disabilities have experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is one of 17 Priority Impact grants awarded totaling \$499,700. The project period spans January 1 – December 31, 2022.



The grant will allow for the expansion of activities offered through Summit's BASE social engagement and activity center including Adaptive Yoga, Audio Book Club, Cost-Effective Healthy Eating Workshop (CHEW), Friend Zone (Weekly Friendship Support group), and Role-Playing Game Day. Activities will be online (virtual) and allow for in-person sessions if COVID-19 safety protocols allow. Each of Summit's offices will receive a limited number of tablet computers with hot-spots and data packs available to be loaned out to give participants with no computer and/or Internet access the ability to participate.

Travis Hoffman, Interim Executive Director, will serve as Project Director, and Madison Morgan, Development and Community Outreach Director, will lead outreach efforts in Summit's service area beginning in early January. For more information visit Summit on Facebook, go to www.summitilc.org, or call 406-728-1630.

Remembering Michael Mayer 1956-2021

Leadership Personified



BEST IN PEOPLE

Flathead County Update:

For the time being, the Kalispell office continues to work by phone and computer, but our doors are not open for walk-ins. Please call us at (406) 257-0048 if you need any assistance and/or are interested in any of the following:

Kalispell's YODA (Youth Opening Doors through Advocacy) group, for people with disabilities ages 14-28(ish), is now meeting virtually again. Please join us on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month from 4-5pm on Zoom for good conversation and lots of fun! Jake Morris has been hired as Youth Program Facilitator and is always open to hearing new ideas for games or activities that we can offer virtually with YODA.

Dianna Kintzler, Independent Living Specialist, received her certification as a Community Partner Work Incentives Counselor in September. If you are on benefits and working (or considering working), she is a great resource for any questions.

Many other classes are now being offered virtually by Summit as well so please reach out for more information on what we are currently offering.

Lynae West, County Coordinator (406)257-0048, Ext 2

Technology Makes Things Easier for Those Who Do Not Have A Disability, Technology Makes Things Possible for Those Who Do

Donald Smith is a Navy veteran who served aboard an aircraft carrier. He is 94 years young and will celebrate his 95th birthday in March. Since he was diagnosed with macular degeneration about five years ago, which has worsened in the last two years, he hasn't been able to enjoy reading or Sudoku, some of his favorite pastimes.

Summit in Kalispell currently has an Optelec Clearview+ on loan to Donald. The Clearview+ is a desktop video magnifier that allows Donald to return to reading and Sudoku. It has been the workforce in the industry for many years thanks to its simplicity, excellent image, broad magnification range and selection of custom features.

Donald and many others are benefiting from new technologies that enables all of us in one way or another.



SHORT BUS

On December 17, Summit staff and BASE members came together to help decorate for the Short Bus Holiday Decorating Extravaganza.

A while back, a *short bus* had been purchased by Summit youth coordinator Michael Beers in efforts to minimize the still prevalent stigma and negative stereotypes of short school buses. Since then, Summit has purchased a new property at 145 S. Russell Street where we plan to build our new building. We decided that it would not only be fun to decorate the short bus and place it on the newly purchased land, but it would be a great way to build community awareness about our new building plans, break down the short bus stigma, and garner public interest and increase community knowledge about Summit Independent Living and the services we offer.

Holiday lights were purchased, and Christmas music playlists were downloaded. Starbucks generously donated two containers of coffee and our future new neighbors at APEX Bistro in the VRTX fitness center, graciously shared with us a pot of hot cocoa. Members from BASE and a few Summit staff members had a fun afternoon of music, lights, and laughter. Although originally accepted to serve Summit participants, much of the hot beverages were given to individuals either waiting to get on the bus, or to those just hopping off, and helped us to strengthen our sense of community.

We now have a short bus, beautifully decorated with lots of holiday cheer, as our beacon of hope, pointing us in the direction of our new home. Stop by and take a few pictures before more changes occur the weekend of January 7-9. Happy Holidays everyone!



BASE EVENTS

725 West Alder, #4 Missoula, MT

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.

BASE Virtual Activities

YODA (You Opening Doors through Advocacy)
Tuesdays 4-6pm on Zoom

All Abilities Yoga
Wednesdays 4-5pm on Zoom

BASE Wrestling Foundation BWF
1st and 3rd Wednesdays monthly 5-6pm
On Zoom

Virtual Photography Group
2nd and 4th Wednesday monthly 5-6pm on ZOOM

BASE Virtual Game Night
Thursdays from 1-4 pm (call for dates and times)

BASEment Improv
Thursdays BASEment Improv 5:30pm-7pm.
Join us for Improv, games, and laughs.

For BASE schedule updates and additional events go to

www.summitilc.org/calendar

or check the BASE Facebook page at

<https://www.facebook.com/base725>

To get involved or to share ideas of new BASE programs, contact BASE

jhoward@summitilc.org or mbeers@summitilc.org.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Adult Tricycle

Schwinn 26" tricycle, bike pump included.
\$500obo (406) 721-1698

Wheelchair Lift

Ricon wheelchair lift model #S1231
G00100100. \$400obo.
Contact: Cory (406) 471-3314

Silver Spring wheelchair ramp 10' L x 36" W

Made of high-strength light weight aluminum. \$297obo. Contact: tamera144@gmail.com or 406-363-4898

1997 Ford Econoline Wheelchair Accessible Van

Miles: 213,737
Call Twyla 231-818-0065

Victory 10 LX scooter

New! \$2500, Call or text Nina 880-2855

Smart Talker text scanner

Slightly used, \$700. Contact Larry at 406-633-4036 or ketch1969@gmail.com

Nova Walker, Quantum 600 power wheelchair, Commode, 2 Transfer Benches, Beezy Manual Wheelchair. Call Gary (406) 224-5527 or garylee032051@gmail.com

Symmetry Stander

Comfortable, easy-to-use seat stander Call Madison (406) 865-0221

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@troyschools.org or troyschools.org, (406) 295-4520.

Acorn Stair lift

For going up to 6 stairs while seated. \$300 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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SUMMIT INDEPENDENT LIVING

700 SW Higgins, Suite. 101
Missoula, MT 59803

Return Service Requested

Phone: 406-728-1630
Toll-Free: 800-398-9002
Fax: 406-829-3309

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Building Awareness, Advocating Change

THE SUMMIT INDEPENDENT

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This publication is available in alternative format on request. Please call 1 (800) 398-9002.



Fresh Food Box

Summit Independent Living and Missoula Food Bank & Community Center are working collaboratively to make the Fresh Food Box program available to more people with disabilities.



Eligibility requirements:

- must have a physical or mental disability that impacts your ability to live independently;
- live in Missoula
- sign up for Summit service;
- be experiencing challenges to your health, safety, ability to live independently, receive vital services, gain or continue employment, or participate in community activities due to COVID-19;
- be experiencing food insecurity due to lack of income, and
- need home delivery of food due to sheltering in place or lack of transportation/assistance to obtain food in the community.

For more information or to apply please call the Summit office at 406-728-1630 or send an email to missoula@summitilc.org.



You can always sign up to get this newsletter by email by visiting www.summitilc.org and signing up