

GOVERNOR'S REPORT 2023



————— Montana —————

Statewide Independent Living Council

MISSION:

*Promote self-determination and
full inclusion of people with
disabilities in Montana*



Montana Statewide Independent Living Council



MTSILC

A word from the SILC Chairman:

On behalf of the Montana Statewide Independent Living Council (MTSILC) it is my sincere pleasure to have served as the chairman for the latter part of 2023. We have enjoyed a productive year and are excited to hear that the Centers for Independent Living continue to increase the number of individuals served. We are pleased to have two new Board members but continue to need new members to serve as Independent Living advocates. The MTSILC Board continues to strive for ways to work cooperatively with the Governor's Office to share and bolster the SILC mission of promoting the self-determination and full inclusion of people with disabilities in Montana. We have started the process of writing Montana's State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL), with an emphasis of writing goals that will guide the SILC through the next three years. Without a doubt, the MTSILC Board is proud that it continues to play an integral role in guiding the future of Independent Living in Montana.

Sincerely,
Scott Williamson

Additional MTSILC Highlights from 2023:

- The Board presently integrally involved in the newly signed Olmstead Plan, with numerous MTSILC members presently serving on this action committee.
- Supported the passage of HB872 which advocates for behavioral health. Members of the SILC marched in Washington D.C. to support Independent Living, advocating for the needs of disability rights.
 - Advocated with Montana Legislators while in Washington D.C
- MTSILC members attended both the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) and the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL).
 - Hired a new Independent Living Program Manager.
 - Conducted a Robert's Rules of Order Training

Montana Statewide Independent Living Council COUNCIL MEMBERS



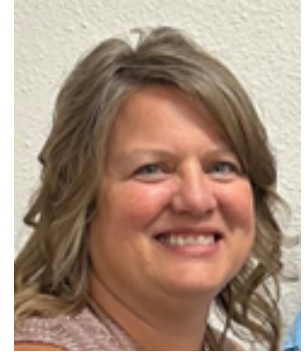
**Scott
Williamson**
Chairman



**Michael
Manhardt**
Vice Chairman



Jean Schroeder
Secretary



Tami Hoar
CIL Director



**June
Hermanson**
Advocate



Julie Williams
MonTECH



Allyson Talaska
VR Rep



Tom Thompson
Board Member

Additional Members:

Hannah Thompson
Advocate

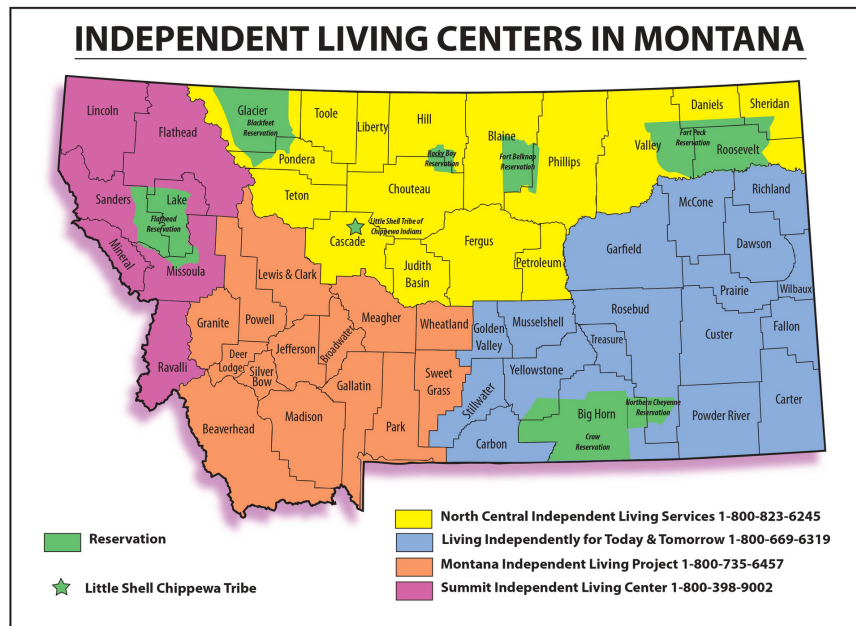
Savanah Smith Strauser
Parent

Core Services:

1. Information and Referral
2. Independent Living Skills
3. Independent and Systems Advocacy
4. Peer Support
5. Transitions

Montana Centers for Independent Living

Montana Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, nonresidential, private nonprofit agencies for individuals with significant disabilities (regardless of age or income). The four Centers across the State are designed and operated within local communities by individuals with disabilities; and provide an array of independent living services. The full inclusion and integration of individuals with disabilities into mainstream society is central. This philosophy is implemented through the MTSILC and the CILs. The CILs provide services to all counties in Montana.



Total Number Served with State-Appropriated Money Total: 4814
(General Fund = 3077, Federal Part B = 1737)

43% increase of individuals served by the CILs over 2022

Most frequent community change achievements experienced by those seeking services:

- Transportation
- Care Issues
- Accessibility
- Health Disability
- Awareness Legislative Collaboration



SUMMIT's year has been filled with all things focused on Independent Living. With the help of the Christopher Reeve foundation, we were able to start a film club. Initially, our short films were centered around individuals with disabilities. As the year progressed and the influx of additional funds, the group progressed to including additional genres, including horror films in October. These films have also been entered into several Film Festivals, featured on their own YouTube Channel, and played in the community at the Roxy Theatre. This project created an empowering way to develop social skills and individual's self-empowerment.

In early June we hosted an American with Disabilities Act picnic with the Adaptive Recreation Clinic at the Meadowlark Shelter at Ft. Missoula. Our celebration picnic featured subs, cake, and ice cream. We enjoyed a great game of adaptive kickball, a variety of different lawn games, and played with adaptive equipment including bikes, scooters, wheelchairs, a drift boat and a paraglider. On July 26, 2023 we also had a City Proclamation read at Missoula's weekly summer "Out to Lunch".

We also collaborated to host a Garden Project, Art-Therapy group with a licensed therapist, Female centered groups, Hero's Squad, and self-advocacy, leadership, Yoga, Art Clubs, and MY Life classes in local schools.

We also had the pleasure of showing off SUMMIT and our growing film program to 10 rural directors of the APRIL staff. What an incredible opportunity to share our clients' talents. We also facilitated a day-long workshop at the APRIL Conference about how to start this Film club in CILs across the country. Additionally, we continue to conduct accessibility grants and have visions of relocating to a new building with greater space and better access to public transportation.

What an exciting year for Ability Montana (formerly mLp). We have been kept busy with a variety of activities across all the counties we cover. We ended the summer with our "Let's Talk Disability, Butte!" performances. Ten performers did an amazing job talking about their disabilities via monolog. These live performances gave stage to individuals to share their collective voices for change.

We had a jam-packed year within our Recreation Department. We were able to sponsor adaptive skating parties this winter in Helena, Bozeman, & Butte. Local members of these communities skate with adaptive equipment. What a great learning opportunity these programs have become.

Additionally, this summer we hosted Ability Days. Those attending camp fly fished the Madison River in specialized float boats- floating, fishing, and sharing the joys of Montana's outdoors. This opportunity was generated with a newly formed partnership with Camp Bullwheel.

Truly as exciting and valuable to us are the variety of peer mentoring classes we hold. This includes several at our county jails focused on 'living-well'. We also hold an Ignite class at Ennis High School and a variety of social-support classes run as book clubs, chess clubs, and Dungeons and Dragons.

Within our communities we facilitate the Snow-Buddies program where volunteers shovel sidewalks for both the elderly and those with disabilities. We also participated in the Gallatin County Commission meeting regarding forming a local transit system. Provided the disability voice in Bozeman's "Belonging in Bozeman" equity and inclusion plan and have been asked to be a continued expert voice on disabilities for the city's ADA coordinator and the City Commission.



During the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the number of consumers LIFTT served increased by 7.08%. Our Information and Referrals (I&Rs) increased by 44.89%. By adding staff and focusing on services and goals, LIFTT was able to expand the number of services consumers received by 92.10% and goals achieved by 148.43 %

On July 26, 2023, LIFTT celebrated the 33rd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in Billings & Glendive, with the participation of strategic partners and elected officials. The theme of the celebration was Disability Inclusion Through Employment. LIFTT is working to change how employers receive and process job applications & avoid discrimination against candidates with disabilities. LIFTT feels it's essential to evaluate job duties to be more inclusive of people with disabilities.

Thanks to a grant from USA Aging grant and the Administration for Community Living – ACL, in association with the county health departments and Pharm406, LIFTT organized & conducted vaccination clinics in all 18 counties in south-central and eastern Montana. These clinics offered RSV, influenza, and COVID-19 vaccines to the aging and disabled population of our service area.

LIFTT has successfully been advocating on behalf of the disabled population of our service area and promoting system changes. We were instrumental in local outreach, helping to facilitate the placement of handicapped-accessible porta-potties at the Saturday morning Farmer's Market in Billings. LIFTT is working with the Billings Trail Net to provide handicap accessibility along the trail system in the Billings community. We were also instrumental in working with the Carbon County health department to provide an electric scooter at a local grocery store to allow persons who could not otherwise access the shopping to do so.

NCILS has had a busy year and again is hosting quarterly meetings with local legislators after a short break due to COVID. It has become an important way to connect legislatures and to the needs of their constituents. Additionally, we partnered with the Montana Empowerment Center and TransCen, Inc. to offer family engagement opportunities that focus on 5th and 6th graders to start looking towards the post-secondary transition process.

We were the primary sponsor for the Montana Leadership Forum and Step 2. These two-youth centered five-day camps are hosted in Helena and focus on instruction around self-advocacy, developing self-advocacy skills, and working on transition. Students attending Step 2 also have an opportunity to job shadow and coordinate with some of the departments within State Government.

In addition, we have bolstered our outreach with Great Plains veteran services. Great Plains is on the Rocky Boy reservation. We have worked to simplifying their access to the VA Center in Great Falls. We provided in-service training and introduced their clients to the LEAD center and LEAD's tools that access competitive and/or customized employment within competitive integrated employment.

Equally important, we are collaborating with the Great Falls Public Library and Many Rivers Mental health to support the library in their desire to better serve social services such as behavioral health, addiction, and homelessness. As libraries have a mission to connect the public with necessary information, this ties in with librarianship's value of promoting social justice.