



The Rural Institute Transition Projects E-News

March 2009

Volume 6, Issue 1

A Quarterly Newsletter Produced by the Rural Institute Transition Projects

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Introduction to Newsletter

By Ellen Condon

The MT-TIRC project is about expanding our vision of what life looks like for youth with developmental disabilities beyond high school. Typically we focus on transition outcomes of work, school, and community living. However, this newsletter and the previous one explore travel, recreation, and leisure activities.

"There is more to life than work."



Wrestling Smiles

By Wade, Mike, and Carla Clarke

Our wrestling experience started about three years ago. We were working with Mrs. Jacobsen of the Special Education program at Flathead High School at the time and our dear friend Mrs. Gibbs from CDC to find our son, who was born with Down Syndrome, an Assistant Manager-type position for one of the sports programs. Football was just finishing up so when Mrs. Jacobsen contacted Coach Thompson of the wrestling program, his response was why doesn't he just go out there where there were any physical reasons why he shouldn't decided to give it a go.

The first practice was pretty intense and with our son having low muscle tone and communication concerns we were having second thoughts about this. Sometimes as parents of a child with a disability we find ourselves taking the easy, safe, and secure path for the child. We would encourage anyone in a similar situation to explore all the possibilities before a decision is made. We kept at it and started seeing the way the kids and coaches were with our son and decided we had to make it work. Then Casey Poier came into the picture. He has been very instrumental in keeping us in the program. Our son was able to work out at practice with Casey and the two of them made the sports page of the local paper. Even though newspaper readers couldn't see the headlock our son had on him, he was smiling in the picture. Casey and our son have developed a very special bond that continues today.

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Resources

University of Montana
Institute Transition Projects
<http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/>

Disabled Sports USA.
www.dsusa.org/index.html

New Horizons Un-limited -
Recreation and Sports Resources
www.new-horizons.org/reccat.html

We value your opinion. To provide feedback to us about this newsletter and our other products, please take our quick online survey at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/58441/transition-projects-feedback>

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Wrestling Smiles, cont.

During the Award Banquet the first year with Flathead Brawlers our son was awarded Most Inspirational Wrestler of the season along with his friend Levi. The crowd gave our son a standing ovation. I looked over and the smiles from Mr. and Mrs. Burmood were indescribable. I had seen these smiles before when our son was 18 months old and started the horse riding program with them. We attribute our fact that he received such wonderful therapy from the B.U.S.A.M.S Riders. They also were a great source of emotional support throughout and very excited about this opportunity.



I arrived at practice in the wrestling room as the team was finishing up yesterday. They have always gathered in a pack at the end of practice to hear encouragement and tips from the coaches, before they do their break routing. Coach Fisher had the team make nominations for Wrestler of the Week and our son was on the list for his efforts. He had three exhibition matches and was declared the winner of those matches this past weekend at a tournament here in Kalispell. He was awarded a Wrestler of the Week t-shirt along with another of his teammates. When Coach Armstrong was announcing the results of the tournament, he commented that when he asked on Saturday for someone to wrestle with Wade Clarke, the whole team had raised their hands to volunteer. All the coaching staff and teammates were smiling. I myself was smiling to hold back tears of joy.

Thanks to the teams, coaches, staff, and the administration of the Flathead Braves and Glacier Wolfpack, this has probably been the best thing that has happened for Wade. We are so proud of our son and proud of him being a part of such a wonderful group of wrestlers. As this wrestling season comes to an end, we realize that we have been able to give our son more independence. We picked him up after practice and let him go to Missoula without mom or dad tagging along, knowing that the team was keeping an eye on him and would help him if he needed it. We would not have made it through all of this had it not been for the efforts of his coaches and his teammates. We will be forever grateful for their kindness and selflessness. We know that our son has gained so much from this as have his very proud parents. We would encourage others to explore the many different resources available and participate in and support after-school activities. The smiles are priceless.

Save the Date

Plan to Attend!

¡ < Y f c Y g '] ~~Promoting~~ learning and success for all children

Montana Council for Exceptional Children
2009 Conference on Diverse Abilities
April 15-17, 2009 - Hilton Garden Inn, Missoula Montana

Resources

PLUK's Montana Recreation Handbook for People with Special Needs

www.pluk.org/Pubs/MT_Rec_Handbook_2007.pdf

Innovation in Motion
www.mobility-usa.com

Access to Recreation, Inc
www.accesstr.com

Disability.gov - Recreation Page
www.disabilityinfo.gov/digov-public/public/DisplayPage.do?parentFolderId=204

National Alliance for Accessible Golf
www.accessgolf.org/

Wilderness Inquiry—Integrated Outdoor Adventures
www.wildernessinquiry.org/register/integrated_adventure.php

USA TechGuide—Wheelchair Sports, Recreation and Accessible Travel
www.usatechguide.org/articledisplay.php?artid=22

Outdoor Unlimited - Assistive Outdoor Equipment Resource List
<http://nyoutdoorsunlimited.com/equipment.htm>



The first couple breaths of cold autumn air shocked my lungs as the van lift touched silently to the ground, bringing my wheelchair to the starting point of this morning's hunt. Two sets of excited eyes met mine with anticipation as all three of us heard the unmistakable squeal of a bull elk, somewhere in the morning darkness. It was the fourth time we had returned to the same location from which we had watched a nice whitetail buck chasing a doe within shooting distance six days earlier, but the short time it takes me to aim had prevented me from firing before they disappeared into a draw. Having passed opportunities to shoot on smaller bucks since then, I was awaiting another chance at the same one.

As my good friend Dan, my girlfriend Mary, and I quietly proceeded into the darkness for the approximately one-mile trek, on foot and wheelchair, to the carefully selected vantage point to await shooting light, the previous week's hunting incidents and other thoughts replayed in my mind. The initial frustration at not having gotten a chance to shoot had been quickly replaced by the gratitude I feel instead for merely still having the chance to hunt. The past seventeen hunting seasons had compounded the meaning of each opportunity and had been quite successful, despite the additional challenges and obstacles I face as someone with a significant disability who loves hunting above all activities.

I had first learned of adaptive recreational equipment through the Recreational Therapy department at Craig Hospital during my initial rehabilitation in 1990. In the midst of "outings" to area malls and theaters, evening board game and group art activities, and weekend trips to professional sporting events, I'd found my niche when introduced to adapted outdoor recreational equipment. A therapist had shown me a "sip & puff" fishing pole and shared information about a rifle mount designed by a former patient that attaches to a wheelchair and allows someone with no arm function to aim a rifle with a chin-controlled joystick and fire it by sucking slightly on a plastic tube. The excitement that such equipment existed shed a new light on my rehabilitation, and I decided right then



and there that I would somehow and sometime acquire that adaptive fishing and hunting equipment.

The common rehabilitative experience for someone who sustains a disabling injury, and often the long-term care protocol for someone born with a disability, frequently follows what I call a medical model. Particularly with insurance reimbursement cutbacks, rehabilitation experiences are getting much shorter and attention is focused only on the most essential concerns, which minimizes social and recreational outlets that are so important to life satisfaction and personal fulfillment. I was and am extremely

fortunate to have learned about such adaptive equipment and to be blessed with some intensely dedicated friends who enable me to pursue such activities and sacrifice time, effort, and even financial expense to help me do so.

Within one year of leaving Craig Hospital, I did acquire that rifle mount and a rifle as a surprise gift from a good friend, received another rifle years later from another friend, and most recently was gifted a rangefinder. Most of all, I cherish hunting time spent with a lifelong friend and mentor as well as my girlfriend. With help from both of them, and sometimes others, I have explored adaptive hunting techniques, found access to quality public and private property, and learned more about animal behavior in an effort to make my experience as successful as possible while retaining the value of a fair chase event. Although I discovered some programs that offer designated disability hunts in assigned locations, on assigned days, and often with assigned companions, my desire and fortune has been to recreate in an area, at a time, and with whom I choose. After all, my greatest joy from hunting is the chance to participate equitably in a common bonding social experience and expend the time and effort necessary to succeed.

In many ways, hunting from a wheelchair has taught me more about the sport than I may have otherwise learned. Sedentary hunting by necessity, for example, has revealed that hunters often miss seeing game animals by passing through a good location instead of watching and waiting for them to move.

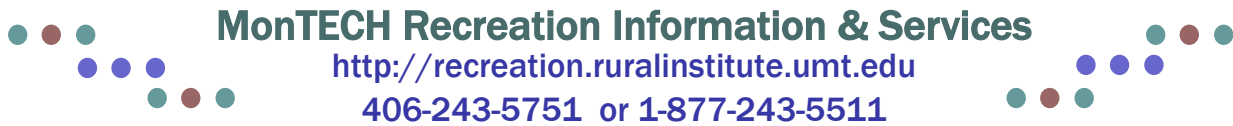
(Continued on page 4)

Lessons I've Learned...., cont.

More time spent in a good general area has also provided opportunities to more closely study habitat and to observe animals' travel patterns and behaviors. Each experience I have provides a lesson that will only improve chances of future success.

Oh, and that morning trek into that good vantage point? The first daylight revealed about 40 head of elk on the facing ridgeline too far away for a shot, but that buck appeared again in nearly the exact same place as the week before. This time, though, he was alone and feeding, unaware we were there watching, and I was ready. He stopped one moment too long and for one too many looks back, so there is now venison in my freezer. Another lesson learned by experience, that whitetails inhabit fairly small territories, that they are animals of routine, and that by passing up smaller bucks my chances of shooting a larger one are greatly increased.

Author Information: Chris Clasby is the MATP Project Coordinator for the MonTECH program at the Rural Institute, located on the University of Montana Campus, Missoula, Montana.



The Montana Access To Outdoor Recreation (MATOR) Project

This program strives to increase opportunities for participation in wildlife viewing, fishing, hunting, and other related activities for individuals with disabilities and those who are aging. MATOR offers the following services:

- Recreational Equipment Library - Borrow recreational equipment free of charge.
- Demonstration Events - Try out equipment, meet the staff, learn about how MATOR can help you get out there.
- Education and Awareness - Learn about adaptive equipment, practices and outreach opportunities.
- Volunteer Network - Check out the many ways you can support MATOR.

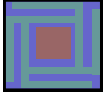
The MATOR program is especially committed to enabling Montanans to participate in outdoor recreation in a location and at a time of their choosing with friends and family who may or may not have disabilities.

Montana Accessible Outdoor Recreation Website

This website is designed to be a one-stop resource for comprehensive accessibility information for public recreation lands surrounding Missoula, and eventually expanding to more of Montana. This website helps users to plan and participate in recreational outings at public outdoor sites in order to increase opportunities and use of facilities by individuals with disabilities.

Our interactive database of accessibility, activity, and resource attributes allows users to enter specific criteria to search for recreational sites that will meet their needs for particular activities. It also includes links for Google Earth and GPS coordinates for specific locations. For example, individuals who use mobility devices are able to identify specific locations that offer accessible camping sites and also have accessible trails and accessible fishing sites. Website users are encouraged to provide feedback after recreational outings to rate their experiences at specific locations with respect to accessibility.

Another MonTECH Resource - The Montana Adaptive Equipment Program (MAEP), provides positioning, seating and mobility equipment to Montanans with developmental disabilities. The program services include an equipment recycle program, long and short-term equipment loan, limited funding for repair and purchase of equipment, and information and assistance related to equipment acquisition. For inquiries regarding MAEP services contact the program coordinator at: maep@ruralinstitute.umt.edu 1-800-732-0323 or 406-243-2841.



When I tell people what my favorite sport is, they're surprised because at 5'9" tall, I am definitely not a powerlifter. Then when I tell them what I can lift, they **really** don't mind me! My best bench press is 85 pounds and my best deadlift is 235 pounds. That's **100 pounds more than I weigh!** I love to powerlift. It helps me get strong and healthy and helps me stay young. I really enjoy lifting - it's fun!

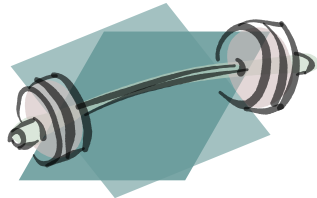
Powerlifting takes dedication, determination and discipline. The dedication is that I train year round, three times a week, for 1½ hours each time.

Determination comes in because a lot of the sport of powerlifting is mental, an attitude, a certain spirit; you **have** to **believe** you **will** beat that weight! Coach Nicole told me that in deadlifting, I have to lift from my legs, not my back, so I don't hurt myself. But she also says that lifting comes from the heart.

The discipline part is knowing the rules and following them. My coach made sure my teammates and I knew the rules of powerlifting as we started training. Powerlifting can be a dangerous sport and we need to be careful. Whether I compete in Special Olympics or in AAPF (Amateur American Powerlifting Federation) sanctioned meets, I have to follow the same rules as every other powerlifter.

After the 2007 Special Olympics Montana State Summer Games, Coach Nicole encouraged me to continue training and compete in the Big Sky State Games in July. Nicole said it would be good for me to

compete in powerlifting competitions outside of Special Olympics. It helps expose other people to those of us with disabilities and show them we can compete on an equal playing field. It also helps to build up my self-confidence by competing at other venues. Competing at events outside of Special Olympics shows other people what I have learned. Other powerlifters don't treat me like everybody else.



At the Big Sky State Games, there was one other female lifter, a teenager from Idaho who did the bench press. I was the only female lifter to compete in the push/pull division, doing bench

press and deadlift. I also competed in Idaho Falls at the Snake River Powerlifting Competition in October of 2007. I set two AAPF records (a bench press record of 80 pounds and a deadlift record of 170 pounds) in a newly formed category specifically for Special Olympic athletes.

When I competed in Idaho Falls, I jumped the gun on one of my bench presses. I didn't hear the judge's command and I got three red lights, which means the judge didn't hear the command because everybody was hollering for me. I didn't get no special treatment and I have to follow the same rules as everybody else. But I had two more chances and I made them count. I listened a lot more carefully even over all the noise.

Because there were only two women at the 2007 Big Sky State Games, Jim Thompson, the Commissioner of the

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Training Calendar

Web Conferences

The audio portion of the Web conferences can be accessed from any telephone and the video portion from a computer with Internet access. There is no cost for any of the sessions.

Youth Track – designed for young people with disabilities, their families, and those who provide services to these youth and families. **All sessions take place from 1:00pm - 2:30 pm Mountain Time.**

Oct. 6 - Disability History

Dec. 1 - Transition and Personal Care Services

Feb. 2 - Adult DD Service Providers – Who are they and what do they do?

Apr. 6 - After Graduation – Ideas for Rich, Full Days

Jun. 1 - Creative Housing Options

Aug. 3 - Self-Awareness, Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination

Audio recordings of Youth Track conferences that have already taken place may be downloaded from the Rural Institute Transition Projects and PLUK Web sites: <http://ruralinstitute.umd.edu/transition> or <http://www.pluk.mt.typepad.com/transition/>

Customized Employment Track – designed for teams that will be implementing Customized Employment with students and other job seekers. **All sessions take place from 1:00pm - 3:00 pm Mountain Time.**

Nov. 3 - An Overview of Customized Employment

Nov. 7 - The Process of Discovery

Jan. 12 - The Vocational Profile

Feb. 17 - Customized Planning Meeting

Mar. 16 - Representational Portfolio

Apr. 20 - Job Development and Negotiation

Session fliers and registration information will be sent to Montana Transition Listserv members. To join the Montana Transition Listserv, go to the [Transition Projects Home Page](#) and enter your email address in the box provided. Fliers may also be downloaded from the Transition Projects Web site as they become available.

Powerlifting...., cont.

powerlifting venue, said we needed more women to compete. So I challenged my mom to start training and compete with me, and she did. There were a total of four women at the 2008 Big Sky State Games. My mom and I both earned gold medals, and I set two new AAPF records.

I like to compete because I get to show what I can do. I earned gold medals! I am a young woman with an intellectual disability so I can compete in Special Olympics. But even though I have an intellectual disability, I can still compete in powerlifting venues outside of Special Olympics. And I want to encourage other athletes with disabilities to find venues to compete in. It can be in running, in cycling, in swimming, in whatever sport you like. But step outside of the box and go for it. Show everyone what you can do.

And next time you see me, all you have to do is see me with my
"guns" locked and loaded.

My Sister Taylon Halden

By Dalton Halden

My sister has a disability called cerebral palsy (CP). This is a disorder due to damage to the brain during birth, or a short time after birth. It can be caused by lack of oxygen. Taylon's CP has caused her to have a balance issue. Taylon has had multiple surgeries including several on her legs. She uses assistance by people or equipment to get around because of her balance.

My sister likes riding the 4-wheeler, snowmobiling, swimming, listening to music, playing outside, playing tag, watching me race, going to grandma and grandpa's, and spending the night at grandma's, going to school, and traveling.

My family has found many ways to change things so that my sister Taylon can participate in activities that our family does both indoors and outdoors. One thing we change has been to reduce the engine speed of our four-wheeler. We use a screwdriver to turn the throttle on the four-wheeler way down to a certain speed that is just right for my sister. There are two washers on the screw that help us to determine the speed that Taylon and we are comfortable with. Taylon knows that we turn the throttle down and she is okay with it. Sometimes we need to remind her that she has a disability and the engine turned up.

Taylon also knows her driving boundaries. —at the end of our driveway there is an open area for turning around. The top of our driveway ends in a huge roundabout that she can drive around. And we've made trails so she can drive around.

Another modification we have made is that we have a trailer we can use to pull Taylon behind the four-wheeler when we go on trails she cannot drive on herself. We tied a rope with many knots in it and nailed it to a piece of wood on the trailer that marks the middle. We taught Taylon to hold on to the rope at all times.

My sister walks with a walker like some people. The walker that my sister uses to get around has wheels. As you can guess wheels and snow don't mix. Snow builds up around. To fix this problem we have come up with a way for her to get around a lot easier in the winter. What we have done is taken a walker (an old one of hers) and taken the wheels off of it and welded a downhill snow ski on each side of the walker allowing her to glide it through the snow. We have not had to make



(Continued on page 7)

My Sister...., cont.



any adaptations to the snowmobile for Talyon to be able to drive it. We just once again make sure Talyon knows her boundaries when driving the snowmobile.

We also built a ledge at the bottom of our downstairs door so that it is smooth to come in and there is no bump to push up a wheelchair or a walker so she can come in and go out as she pleases.

In conclusion, our family loves to be outside and participate in various activities. We have chosen to find ways that we can help to modify equipment so that Talyon can participate along with us.

Although there are some things that are difficult for her, she has shown us with her determination and perseverance that she may have some limitations but she can still do the same things. We make sure that in every activity she is involved in - that she has the proper safety equipment and supervision.



Transition TIP

- ® Don't be afraid to try something new.
- ® Check out clubs and organizations in your community to get ideas about what activities you may want to do or to get support and make friends already involved in an activity you enjoy.
- ® Talk with other people who are involved already in the activity or sport you are interested in pursuing to learn more about it.
- ® Learn what you need for support and accommodations to enable you to participate.
- ® Don't worry if you cannot do the activity yourself keep trying. Remember, this is about having fun!
- ® If you are using the day planner exercise to plan what your day will look like after you graduate, don't forget to put down recreation to look at what skills you may need to learn and practice while you are still in school.

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