

Main Street

M O N T A N A

7 WorkSafeMT

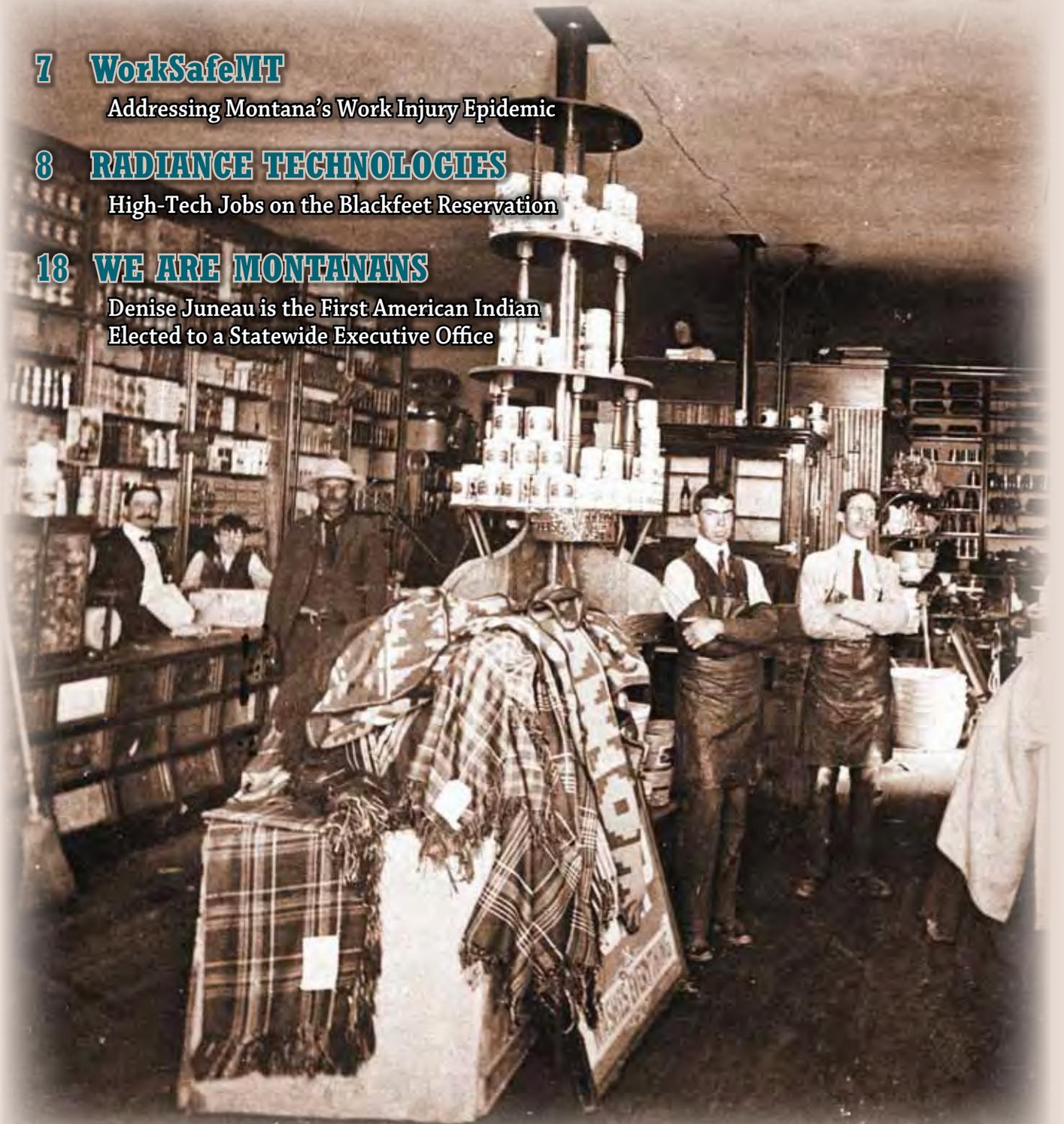
Addressing Montana's Work Injury Epidemic

8 RADIANCE TECHNOLOGIES

High-Tech Jobs on the Blackfeet Reservation

18 WE ARE MONTANANS

Denise Juneau is the First American Indian
Elected to a Statewide Executive Office





Blackfoot Indians and Glacier National Park Pendent, photo courtesy of the late Stu Miller

The Blackfoot Indians were the first inhabitants of what is now defined as Glacier County, moving into the area from Saskatchewan around 1730. Though Lewis and Clark passed through in 1806, very few pioneers ventured into the territory due to conflicts with the Blackfoot Tribe. Only a few trappers and fur traders were willing to endure the territory's hardships in order to survive.

Although oil was discovered in Montana around 1864, it wasn't until a large oil strike near Shelby in the 1920's that interest in the fossil fuel erupted. Even though there are still oil wells in production today, wind is quickly surpassing oil as the most sought after energy resource in the area.

Blackfoot Reservation is 1.5 million acres, including most of Glacier County. It's home to the Blackfoot Nation, the largest tribe in Montana, with approximately 8,600 members.

As with many Montana communities, the railroad played a major role in the development of Glacier County. Great Northern Railroad crews reached the area in 1890 and established a small station at Cut Bank. The arrival of the railroad helped expand the growing mining and livestock industries. Today the railroad still plays a big role in farming operations, with grain shipped to the west coast for the Asian markets.

Glacier County leads the state and is third in the nation when it comes to the amount of land that is devoted to the production of barley. As a result, agriculture is a vital part of the county's economy. With roughly 48,000 head of cattle, 1,000 head of sheep and nearly 25,000 hogs and pigs, livestock also plays a key role in county's economy.

In this issue of *Main Street Montana*, our focus is on the new opportunities on the horizon for Glacier County. We'll talk about the latest wind farm and how the Montana Alberta Transmission Line will benefit the county and the rest of the state, the history behind a couple of the area's well known local businesses, and training opportunities the Incumbent Worker Training Program will open up for small businesses.



Keith Kelly, Commissioner
Department of Labor & Industry

Main Street Montana, www.MainStreet.mt.gov, is a bi-annual subscription from the Department of Labor and Industry. If you would prefer to receive our subscription electronically or wish to discontinue receipt, please send an electronic message to MainStreet@mt.gov.

2 COMMISSIONER'S LETTER

4 CONTRIBUTORS

5 GLACIER COUNTY IS WIND COUNTRY

Montana has the fastest wind energy development growth rate in the nation

6 TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

Blackfeet Community College is preparing its students for the jobs of the future as it preserves the past

7 WorkSafeMT

The WorkSafeMT Foundation launches campaign to address Montana's work injury epidemic

8 DREAMCATCHERS

A high-tech small business is bringing jobs and opportunity to the Blackfeet Reservation

11 INCUMBENT WORKER PROGRAM

A new program is giving small businesses the help they need to retrain their employees for changing market demands

12 IRON MAN

A Cut Bank man is turning scrap iron into a "green" business

13 BROWNING HIGH SCHOOL

A look at the brand new high school building and what it means for Browning's students

14 TOP TEN

Meet the top ten private employers of Glacier County

18 WE ARE MONTANANS

Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau is the first American Indian to serve in a statewide executive office

20 MONTANA WEATHERING THE NATIONAL RECESSION

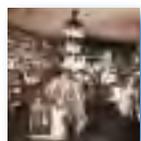
A look at how Montana's economy is weathering the economic downturn

22 BILLMAN'S

A family business continues to grow, despite the national recession

24 REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

What is a reasonable accommodation?



The 2009 fall edition of Main Street Montana is brought to you by the Montana Department of Labor and Industry.



Front cover photo credit:

Broadwater store at Browning Montana, Peter De Rosier on left behind counter. July 2, 1956

Courtesy, Montana Historical Society

Table of Contents photo credits:

Pg. 5 - Glacier Wind Farm Turbine & Jag Courtesy: Department of Commerce Energy Promotion and Development Division

Pg. 8 - Testbed Manager, Bobby Foster, adjusts the pull tension courtesy Johnny Walker

Pg. 18 - Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau

Back cover photo credit:

Glacier Park, Travel Montana, Courtesy of Donnie Sexton



Working Friends One-Stop, Blackfeet Manpower provides employment and educational opportunities as well as supportive services to the Blackfeet Reservation and surrounding communities. The Blackfeet Culture plays a huge influence on the overall program, it ties each program together.

Cut Bank Job Service Workforce Center focuses on developing and maintaining a high quality workforce system for Glacier County by providing services to demand-driven businesses and job seekers, government officials and entities, the public and its own employees.



The Governor's Office of Economic Development serves to advise the Governor on policy issues related to economic development; lead the state's business recruitment, retention, expansion, and start-up efforts; and serves as the state's primary economic development liaison between federal, state, and local agencies, Montana tribal governments, private nonprofit economic development organizations and the private sector.



The Human Rights Bureau of the Department of Labor and Industry receives and investigates complaints of discrimination. The Hearings Bureau of the Department conducts hearings in discrimination cases. The Montana Human Rights Commission hears appeals of decisions by the hearings examiner and decisions of the Human Rights Bureau.



The Montana Department of Commerce, Energy Promotion and Development Division works directly with the Governor, the Governor's Office of Economic Development and other state agencies to help facilitate processes related to permitting, siting, workforce, and financial assistance.

The Montana Department of Labor and Industry's Research and Analysis Bureau gathers data, performs research and analysis, hosts the Montana Career Information System; produces career information on the State's industry and occupational employment activities such as wages, labor force statistics, and unemployment at www.ourfactsyourfuture.org.

The Montana Department of Labor and Industry's Wage and Hour Bureau enforces provisions of the Montana Wage Payment Act, minimum wage and overtime law, Public Contracts / Prevailing Wage Law and the State Child Labor Standards Act.

The Office of Public Instruction works with students, teachers, community members, and its education partners in an effort to provide the best education possible for all Montana's students.



Editors: Casey Kyler-West (Far Right)
Margaret Ore (Top Right)

Graphic Layout: Casey Greenwood (Far Left)
Stevie Harper (Bottom Left)

GLACIER COUNTY IS WIND COUNTRY

Author: Chantel McCormick

A study published recently by Harvard University reaffirmed that Montana is one of the top states for potential energy generated by wind.

While the entire Eastern two-thirds of the state has very strong wind speeds, no where are they more consistent than in Glacier Country and surrounding areas. Through Governor Brian Schweitzer's outspoken promotion combined with the best clean and green tax incentives in the nation, wind energy developers from around the country and the world are taking notice of Montana's great resources.



Currently wrapping up construction in Glacier and Toole counties is Phase II of the Glacier Wind Farm, a project of NaturEner USA. Phase II will create 103.5 megawatts and when combined with Phase I - a total of 210 megawatts - it is Montana's largest wind energy project. This will boost the state's wind power output to 376 megawatts, and Montana will continue to have the fastest wind energy development growth rate in the nation.

NaturEner is already planning another large wind farm, also in Glacier and Toole counties, just west of Highway 15 and north of U.S. Highway 2, about 25 miles due north of the Glacier project. Rim Rock, with an additional investment of \$800 million, will include an additional 206 turbines - or 309 megawatts - and will be one of the largest wind projects in the Northwest. Construction of this project will coincide with that of the Montana Alberta Tie transmission line (MATL).

MATL, a project of Tonbridge Power, will run from Great Falls to Lethbridge, Alberta and will carry 600 megawatts

of wind energy. NaturEner is one of three wind developers who have secured capacity on this line which recently received a \$161 million loan from the U.S. Department of Energy to begin construction this fall. Nearly two-thirds of the project falls inside the United States border and will employ hundreds of Montana workers.



*Chantel McCormick
Senior Energy Development Specialist
Montana Department of Commerce*

The economic benefit of MATL and subsequent wind development is significant. The estimated tax revenue collected from MATL alone would bring an annual \$730,000 to the state and at least \$100,000 to each county through which the line runs. An expected 55 MATL-related jobs will result in \$4.6 million in wages while construction of the associated wind projects will require 1400 short term jobs with an estimated \$53 million in wages.

Once fully operational, the wind projects will continue to provide lasting economic benefits to Montana. We can count on an anticipated \$6 million in annual wages from permanent jobs and \$8 million in annual county and state revenue. Additionally, land owners with wind towers on their land will receive combined annual lease payments of \$2.7 million. All totaled, the economic benefit from wind energy development associated with MATL is \$16 million per year. Assuming a wind project life span of 20 years, we stand to see an impact of \$3.2 billion in Glacier, Toole, and surround counties alone.

In 2004, we claimed less than one megawatt of installed wind energy. Currently, Montana wind projects generate 376 megawatts of clean energy with much more on the way. Constructing new and upgrading existing infrastructure is the key in ensuring that Montana wind energy will continue to be steadily developed, which will not only bring jobs and economic benefits to Montana, but will also help provide a solution to our growing national energy crisis.



TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

Author: Casey Kyler-West

In the early 1970's the Blackfeet Tribe saw the need for adult education in the tribal community; by 1972 the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council established a 10 year comprehensive plan that included a community college or vocation/technical school. That goal became a reality in 1976, when the Blackfeet Board of Regents entered into an agreement with Flathead Valley Community College to offer extension courses on the reservation. That was only the beginning. The college sought and received candidacy status from the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges and Blackfeet Community College became fully accredited in 1985.

As the college continues to expand by adding new programs and more facilities, President John Salois values the role education plays in his community. "Growing up, I looked around and saw all the hardships. Education is the answer to the problems here, we can make positive changes in people's lives and I see it day to day with the students."



John Salois
President Blackfeet Community College

The college is also working to make it easier for students who live outside Browning to attend class by planning for the addition of student housing. "Even though we're a two-year college, we have students who drive in excess of 100 miles a day back and forth to school," says Salois. The school also has a high number of single parents, so having access to the campus and child care facilities would make it easier for those looking to further their education. Another way the college tries to improve access is by providing online courses. To date, there are 30 different online classes available.



Blackfeet Community College



Students in the Computer Resource Center

While the college is responsive to the needs of the community, it also has another responsibility; to preserve the heritage of the Blackfeet culture. What makes tribal colleges different from community colleges is the effort to preserve the individual heritage and incorporation of that tribal history into the curriculum. "At Blackfeet Community College, we make sure our tribal culture stays alive," says Salois.



Construction site for the new science building

As the school preserves the past, it also looks to the future to prepare its students for new opportunities. Currently, Blackfeet Community College is in the process of partnering with the University of Montana and the College of Technology to develop a program for an alternative energy technician course. The school is also looking at a partnership with UM-Western that would grant a bachelor's degree in education through classes at Blackfeet Community College. Construction is also underway on the new science building, which will house three classrooms and a research lab.

Although the school is being responsive to the needs of the tribe, it also tries not to flood the local market with too many students trained in one area, so that they are able to find a job after they earn their two-year degree or training certification. "It's a delicate balancing act," says Salois. Many graduates have gone on to start their own business and some have joined the Tribal Council. "Everything we do here is connected to the community," says Salois.

WorkSafeMT LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO ADDRESS MONTANA'S WORK INJURY EPIDEMIC

Author: George Kochman, executive director, WorkSafeMT

Since miners, loggers and cowboys first rode into Montana looking to make their fortunes; our state has attracted self-made trailblazers who see life and work as synonymous with independence. But that freewheeling spirit exacts a price.

Recent statistics show that Montana has the second highest work-injury rate in the country. More people lose time to work injuries here than in Washington, Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada or the Dakotas. Montana has had one of the nation's worst workplace death rates over the past decade. Since 1993, more than 750 Montanans have gone to work in the morning and not come home to their families.

We know what you're thinking. We have dangerous occupations. With all the farming, logging and mining, it's only natural that Montana workers would have higher incident rates. After all, we are wielding chainsaws and driving heavy equipment and running rock crushers 1,000 feet below ground. Truth is, that has nothing to do with it.

None of our surrounding states — which have virtually identical industry profiles — is plagued by workplace injuries like Montana. Of the professional categories tracked, our work injury rate is approximately 50 percent higher than the national average. We hurt more nurses, roofers, retail clerks, teachers, delivery people, housekeepers, traveling salesmen, office workers, and on and on, than most anywhere else in the U.S.

Our past is costing us dearly. We can no longer afford to simply shrug and accept it as our future.



Lt. Governor John Bohlinger addresses WorkSafeMT Conference



Materials that will be distributed during WorkSafe Commitment Month

WorkSafeMT launches commitment campaign

The WorkSafeMT Foundation was established in May 2008 by business leaders, both private and public employers, and labor leaders.

Our nonprofit group will launch its initial public information effort this fall. The effort is centered on declaring November as WorkSafe Commitment Month, during which time a mass media campaign will encourage companies and their workers to go online and commit to incorporating programs to improve workplace safety. Comprehensive safety programs should include activities outlined in the Montana Safety Culture Act — such as structured safety orientations, ongoing safety trainings and the formation of workplace safety committees.

It's an important task. If Montana businesses simply fall in line with national injury rate averages, we estimate that companies and workers would save approximately \$145 million per year. That's significant. Imagine being able to put that kind of money into salaries, operational improvements and other upgrades.

The campaign includes a short film narrated by J.K. Simmons, best known for his roles as the editor in the "Spiderman" series and the father in "Juno," and featuring Montana business and political leaders. The film will air statewide early in November as a way to kick off the campaign. In addition, WorkSafeMT will launch an informative and engaging website and mass media effort to spread the word.

Look for the campaign to launch in early November. And encourage the business owners and workers you know to improve safety in their workplaces. For more information on the campaign and how you can get involved, visit www.worksafemt.com. To get a copy of our forthcoming State of the State on workplace safety, you can find it on our website (www.worksafemt.com) or contact george@worksafemt.com.

RADIANCE TECHNOLOGIES

Author: Casey Kyler-West

“Innovation, Agility, Experience” isn’t just the motto for Radiance Technologies, it’s what the company is bringing to one of its newest facilities in Browning.

The partnership began when Chief Old Person, who wanted to bring industry to the Blackfeet Reservation, attended the Rez 2005 Conference in Las Vegas. There he met with representatives from Radiance Technologies, who were looking for another location to put a project office. “Radiance established a similar program with the Rosebud Sioux in South Dakota and after seeing the success of the project office and the positive impact it had on that Tribe, the company wanted to build on another reservation,” says Radiance senior consultant Johnny Walker. With the help of Montana’s U.S. Senators Max Baucus and Jon Tester, that possibility became a reality.



Romona Croff, a Radiance employee and Blackfeet Tribal member, segregates fibers as they enter the die during start up, photo courtesy Johnny Walker

The Blackfeet Planning Department secured an EDA grant (Economic Development Administration) and the Blackfeet Tribe provided a \$277,500 dollar match to renovate the facility that Pikuni Industries (a tribally owned construction company) is doing the work to prepare for Radiances’ relocation to Blackfeet reservation. The building is located at the Blackfeet Industrial Park.

“This is an enormous opportunity for our community. It’s building jobs and increasing the income of our people so that we can compete in the marketplace and fulfill the Tribe’s obligation; to employ our people,” says Blackfeet Planning Director Emorie Davis Bird.

Initially, the Browning facility will be working to fulfill a contract with the Department of Defense which calls for the production of a composite material that’s an alternative to metal for missile defense. The new material must be lighter, stronger, and stiffer; a popular process because the new material is more cost effective. But Radiance and the Tribe hope to bring in other contracts as well. “It’s important for Indian communities to be productive and provide these opportunities,” says Bird.

As a small business owned by its employees, Radiance is committed to long term growth. Rather than import its employees from out of



Operations Manager, David Van Epps (holding the pail) works to calibrate the new pultrusion test bed, photo courtesy Johnny Walker

state, the company wants to recruit the majority of its employees from the reservation. Because training and education will play a key role in the recruitment of employees, Radiance is in the process of building a relationship with Blackfeet Community College and the Montana University System to develop a curriculum that will meet its needs. “We’re looking for our employees to invest in this too; it’s not just a regular 40 hour a week job. We want new ideas and encouraging our youngsters’ education is key,” says Walker. Those who complete the training at Blackfeet Community College and receive their certification will get tuition support from Radiance to continue their education at Blackfeet Community College or within the state’s University system.

A Pikuni small business will be organized and established, with Radiance acting more as a mentor. Another goal is to be the largest employer on the Blackfeet Reservation. Right now the Tribe is the largest employer, employing 750 members. Based in Huntsville, Alabama, Radiance has 400 employees with locations all over the U.S. and overseas.



Radiance Employees Renovating the Pikuni Facility photo courtesy Casey Kyler-West

CUT BANK JOB SERVICE

Author: Gary Ellingson

Located at 501 East Main, the Cut Bank Job Service provides a one-stop environment for job seekers and is part of the Rocky Mountain Front Workforce Centers, along with the office in Shelby.

Co-located with the Glacier County Public Assistance Office, the Cut Bank Job Service also hosts Vocational Rehabilitation, Opportunities Inc., Job Corps, military recruiters and other members of the one-stop system. The one-stop system is designed so that those who need various services can find them in one place.

Workforce consultants also provide outreach services at the Blackfeet Manpower Office in Browning, which encompasses East Glacier, St. Mary and Babb. They travel to the Pondera County Courthouse in Conrad and the Senior Citizen Center in Valier.

For the workforce consultants who work in the Cut Bank office, their job means more than providing services. “My favorite part of this job is the people, being able to congratulate an individual when they find a job and seeing how happy they are with their accomplishment, is the best part of what I do,” says workforce consultant Dawn Barrett. “I love helping a client with job search, but I also enjoy the challenge of helping employers find qualified employees on short notice,” says consultant Gloria Weaver.

Helping employers and employees find a good match is only part of what the Cut Bank Job Service Office does. The Cut Bank office also participates in the local community management team meetings, port authority meetings and in the area Chambers of Commerce to stay up to date on the latest economic developments and county activities. “There are great business people here who work hard to make the community and the county a better place to live, and I think it’s so important to be a part of that,” says consultant Fred Greco.

“This is where the farmlands meet the mountains and it’s the gateway to Glacier National Park. The area has some of the most generous and warm people I know, who are always willing to lend a helping hand. This makes being a part of the community so great,” says Cut Bank Office Manager Gary Ellingson.



Cut Bank Job Service Office

TRAINING TOMORROWS WORKFORCE

Authors: George Kipp IV and Dan McFadyean

The Blackfeet Tribe is positioning itself to have qualified construction workers for the work that is planned and underway in and around Browning. Road, bridge, water, sewer and even huge wind power development projects are just some of the job-laden opportunities that the Blackfeet Nation is aiming to capture for their unemployed community members. Under the direction of George Kipp IV, the training effort is a partnership with the Blackfeet Tribal Council, Montana Labors Union, Blackfeet Manpower, Blackfeet Housing, Department of Interior Office of Indian Energy & Economic Development, and Blackfeet TERO.

Using Montana Laborers Union Local 1686 on-site training assistance more than 90 community members were certified in heavy construction courses and 15 community members were certified as Commercial Drivers (CDL). All construction workers were trained on the Blackfeet Reservation by Manpower contracted trainers. All CDL trainees were trained by Bear Traxx and Associates, a local native owned commercial drivers training organization. According to one of the trainers, “The trainees were an excellent group of individuals who are highly motivated and will be marketable for future work in this industry.”

While all of the trainees were excited about their certification, one in particular was extremely proud. When the only female attending the pipeline training was asked why she wanted this training, Marie Trombley said, “I wanted to make myself marketable in this job market since there will be many opportunities in this area. I love this work!”

Warren Smeltzer of the Laborers International Union of North America said, “This training will assist these individuals for future employment and will definitely help them secure employment with upcoming building contracts on the reservation and throughout Montana.” He continued, “I am very proud of all of these trainees, they are very energetic and get right in there without any hesitation.”

Funding for the training came from a number of sources including the Department of the Interior, Blackfeet Tribal Council, Blackfeet Manpower, Blackfeet Housing and Montana State Workforce Innovation Regional Economic Development (WIRED) grant. “The partnerships between the Blackfeet Manpower and the other agencies are a vital component to the success of these training programs,” said Dan McFadyean.



Blackfeet Manpower and Partnership Training Session

PREVAILING WAGE IN GLACIER COUNTY

Author: Randy Siemers, Compliance Specialist, Wage & Hour Unit

Going to the Sun Road - a significant portion of which lies within Glacier County - is not only an engineering marvel, it is a testament to the experience and skills of the men and women who constructed and to this day continue to upgrade this exciting thruway. Experience and skill in construction does not come easily; generally, it represents years of work in the industry. When taxpayers in Glacier County want to construct a public building or public roadway, they want the work done by a reputable contractor who hires experienced and skilled workers.

Montana's Prevailing Wage Law helps ensure taxpayers get what they pay for. Enacted in 1931, the prevailing wage law, also known as the "Little Davis-Bacon" Act, is designed, in part, to attract highly skilled laborers to perform quality workmanship. Simply stated, the law requires a contractor to pay construction workers wages and benefits commensurate with the wages and benefits "prevailing" in the area for public works in which the total cost of the contract is in excess of \$25,000. The law also requires a hiring preference for Montana workers. In addition, the law protects local labor markets and eliminates wage cutting as a method of competing for public contracts. And, it provides an equal opportunity for Montana contractors to bid on public works contracts.

Montana's prevailing wage law applies to public works contracts entered into for construction services or non-construction services by the state, county, municipality, school district, or political subdivision.

The new Browning High School was built using prevailing wages and is a recent example of the purposes and benefits of the prevailing wage law in action. The men and women who worked on this project were paid the prevailing wage for each classification of work they performed. In return, workers performed their duties with exceptional experience and skill – maybe with a dose of pride thrown in. As a result, taxpayers received a quality school building at a reasonable price.



Going to the Sun Road, photo courtesy Randy Siemers

VETERAN UPDATE

Author: Brad Nelson, Veterans Employment Program Manager

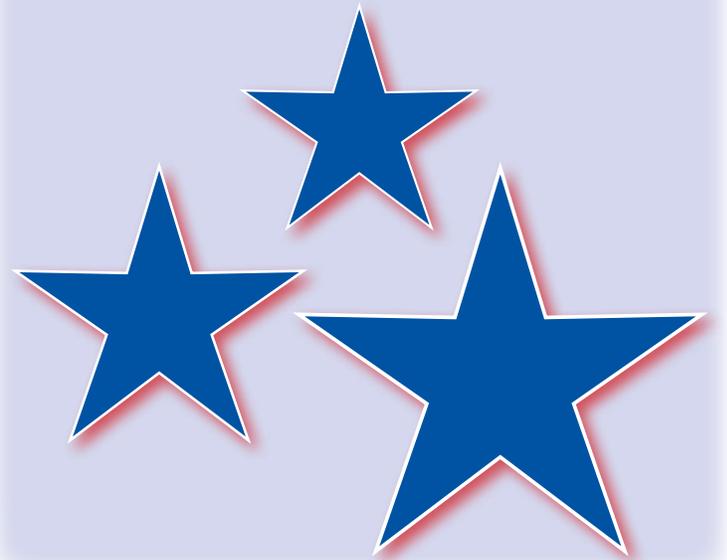
Montana combat veterans will have more resources to help them readjust to life on the home front.

A recent article by Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki announced the expansion of counseling for combat veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is establishing Vet Centers in 28 additional communities across the country in 2010, including two in Montana—one in Cascade County and another in Flathead County. "VA is committed to providing high-quality outreach and readjustment counseling to all combat veterans," Secretary Shinseki said. "These 28 new Vet Centers will address the growing need for those services."

The community based Vet Centers, already in all 50 states, are a key component of the VA's mental health program, providing veterans with mental health screening and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) counseling. The existing 232 centers conduct community outreach to offer counseling on employment, family issues and education to combat veterans and family members, as well as bereavement counseling for families of service members killed on active duty and counseling for veterans who were sexually harassed on active duty.

Vet Center services are earned through service in a combat zone or area of hostility and are provided at no cost to veterans or their families. They are staffed by small multi-disciplinary teams, which may include social workers, psychologists, psychiatric nurses, masters-level counselors and outreach specialists. More than 70 percent of Vet Center employees are veterans themselves, a majority with combat zone service.

The Vet Center program was established in 1979 by Congress, recognizing that many Vietnam-era veterans were still having readjustment problems. In 2008, the Vet Center program provided over 1.1 million visits to more than 167,000 veterans, including over 53,000 visits by more than 14,500 veteran families. More information about Vet Centers can be found at www.vetcenter.va.gov/index.asp.



NEW PROGRAM BOOSTS SMALL BUSINESSES

Author: Jennifer Lawson, Marketing Specialist, Workforce Services Division, MT Department of Labor and Industry

Montana Department of Labor and Industry's Workforce Services Division will launch its first ever Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) program by the end of the year. This program provides job training funds for small businesses to re-train workers for changing market demands.

"I am excited to get this program going," said Dave Morey, bureau chief of the 21st Century Workforce Bureau and administrator of the IWT program. "Job training for the employees of small businesses has long been a missing ingredient in the mix of services that we can offer to Montana's employers and workers. The emphasis has always been on helping those who are not employed. The Incumbent Worker Training Program is a good start toward addressing the need to prevent unemployment and develop the capacity of those who are still working."

Initially the Incumbent Worker Training Program was a pilot program, approved by the 2007 State Legislature for the southeastern region of the state. The success of the pilot prompted the 2009 Legislature to approve the Incumbent Worker Training Program for the whole state.

"I am very grateful for this program," said Alicia Moe, co-owner and general manager of Cream of the West in Harlowton. "I was in dire need of marketing training, and this program was essential in helping me acquire training for the skills I need. I've used the newly acquired marketing skills to open up new possibilities for some of our products. For example, the expansion of "Montana Crunch" markets is directly connected to a training called Eureka! Winning Ways sponsored by the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center. I've also learned the positive impact of highlighting healthy, Montana-made products."

The Incumbent Worker Training Program can pay up to \$2,000 each year for tuition, fees, books and related training costs per full-time employee, while part-time employees can receive up to \$1000 dollars per year. The small business employer must match the program's cost at 20%.



Alicia Moe, co-owner and General Manager of Cream of the West



Big Bear Electric staff

"Participating in the Incumbent Worker Training Program is a smart business decision, especially with the economy the way it is," said Denise Bassett, co-owner of Big Bear Electric in Livingston. "This program helped us re-train our workers to keep up with green and energy saving technology changes in our industry."

To be eligible, small businesses must have been in business in Montana for at least a year and be duly registered as a business with the Secretary of State. The employer must have no more than 20 employees in one location, and no more than 50 statewide. Eligibility can be determined by local Business Expansion and Retention (BEAR) teams, local Small Business Development Councils and the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center at MSU Bozeman.

Businesses who are interested but have no direct contact with these business support and education entities can contact their local Job Service office for more information.

IRON MAN

Author: Casey Kyler-West

During the 24 years that Merle Shortman worked for the Glacier County Road Department, he noticed the large amount of scrap iron left in the area of the once booming oil fields.

Shortman decided to seize the opportunity and open M&M Iron and Recycling. "There are hundreds of tons of iron buried throughout Glacier County and some of the surrounding counties. It was too expensive for the oil companies to haul it out of here, so they dug big holes and pushed all the iron in," says Shortman.

Shortman bought property right next to the railroad and M&M Recycling opened its doors in December of 2006. "The first year was the toughest year, we started from scratch. I had to haul 16 truckloads of dirt and remove two buildings before we could really get going," says Shortman.



Merle Shortman, Owner M&M Iron and Recycling



M&M Recycling Yard

the price of iron. Though he accepts more than iron, when the price of iron drops, it impacts the rest of his business by affecting the price he can pay for other recyclables. While the economic downturn has had little impact on M&M Recycling, it did affect the price of iron earlier this year and Shortman had to hold 12 railcars full of iron for six months before he could market them.

Future plans include a car crusher at his facility. He also wants to buy roll out dumpsters that he can take on-site and facilitate disposal. "So many people have iron around, but no way to bring it in, so if I can get some trucks and roll out dumpsters it will make the process easier," says Shortman. Another goal of Shortman's is to open a second recycling facility within a 40 mile radius of Cut Bank. Every dollar he makes now goes back into the business so that he can not only achieve his current goals, but have a thriving business to pass on to his son.

Flash forward three years and Shortman is tearing down more buildings and expanding. "We've seen a 500% increase from when we started," says Shortman. M&M Recycling recycles more than iron; people can also bring in aluminum, appliances, batteries, brass, copper, engine blocks, lead, magazines, motors, newspaper, radiators and stainless steel. On average day M&M Recycling receives between five and 800 pounds of aluminum cans. To give you an idea of how much that is, it takes 23 cans to equal one pound. With the exception of the iron that goes out by train, Shortman hauls everything to Great Falls, which is 110 miles away.

Because of its proximity to the Canadian border, Canadians also bring their recyclables to M&M Recycling because they get a better rate there than in Lethbridge. But that rate also depends on



Silo that Shortman will tear down to expand M&M recycling yard

BROWNING HIGH SCHOOL

Author: Shannon Hughes

We all know that small businesses and Main Street Montana define the character of Big Sky Country, but sometimes we fail to realize the vital role our schools play in making our future a prosperous one.

The dedication of the new high school in Browning took place on August 17th, marking the beginning of a new era for Browning's students, teachers, and future leaders. The new building is considerably different from the 1950's structure built to accommodate 300 students, which was busting at the seams by 2008 when 600 high school



August 17th, Dedication Ceremony

students filled its classrooms and outdated facilities. The school was also lacking in the technological advances that are a central part of today's curriculum and necessary for a student's ability to succeed in a competitive job market. Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau commented on the advantages the new facilities provide, saying "There are great science rooms, art rooms, and a beautiful library. These students have amazing resources available to them."

The \$22 million project encompasses new computer and science facilities, and a "cafetorium" that will double as both cafeteria and auditorium for the performing arts presentations. As Juneau noted, "The function of the building is great. Offices located in the center of the school allow for an eye down every hall so students are on their best behavior." Even the new school layout and aesthetics encourage students and teachers to excel. "Beautiful new rooms with medicine wheels painted on the floor, views of Chief Mountain, and the Blackfeet name given to each room all have a spiritual significance that inspires the kids and their teachers," said Juneau. Referring to the wider hallways and more suitable spaces for 600 students, Juneau half jokingly remarked, "Perhaps the biggest difference students notice is that the hallways are now big enough to get by each other when classes are let out."



Browning High School

Eventually the school district plans to put all Browning schools on the 310 acres. The Board of Trustees is also hoping to build a new vocational technical facility.

As today's economy calls for an increasing number of skilled workers to build the new energy infrastructure and to engineer the solutions to the challenges we are facing, this investment would be a great benefit to Browning's students. Given the abundance of available energy resources in the area, having young scientists and engineers graduating from the high school will also be a tremendous benefit to the community.



Raising the flag

TOP 10 PRIVATE EMPLOYERS

Glacier Electric Coop



Albertsons



Glacier Care Center



Northern Ford



Cenex Harvest States





GLACIER COUNTY AT A GLIMPSE

Author: Aaron McNay

Total population: 13,297
(Census, 2008)

Median age: 31.3 (Census, 2007)

Median household income: \$36,054
(Census, 2007)

Average unemployment rate: 8.3%
(BLS LAUS estimate, 2008)

Top five industries in terms of employment:

- 1) Accommodation
- 2) Food Services and Drinking Places
- 3) Food and Beverage Stores
- 4) Oil and Gas Extraction
- 5) Gasoline Stations

For information on employment by industry, new businesses, labor market information, job projections, and hourly pay by occupation visit www.ourfactsyourfuture.org.

Or call the Montana Department of Labor and Industry's Research and Analysis Bureau (406) 444-2638, or mail P.O. Box 1728, Helena, MT 59624.

Northern Rockies Medical Center



McDonalds



Alme Construction



Glacier Park Inc.



Town Pump



IN GLACIER COUNTY

McDonalds, Alberstons, Glacier Care Center, & Town Pump photos courtesy Casey Kyler-West. Glacier Park Inc photos courtesy Glacier Park Inc & Donnie Sexton Department of Commerce. Glacier Electric Glacier Electric, Northern Rockies Medical Center, Cenex Harvest States courtesy CHS Inc. & Northern Ford courtesy of businesses. Alme Construction Courtesy Gary Ellingson.

**This list includes only private industry employers subject to Unemployment Insurance. Railroads and city, county, state and federal government agencies (including public school districts and universities) are excluded.*

TOP 10 PRIVATE EMPLOYERS IN GLACIER COUNTY

Albertsons



"You've got to give the customer the merchandise they want, at a price they can afford, complete with lots of tender, loving care," said **Albertsons** founder Joe Albertson. This simple philosophy guided Albertson as he opened his first grocery store in Boise, Idaho on July 21, 1939.

The newspaper ad for the grand opening of "Idaho's largest and finest food store" promised customers benefits that have been standard ever since.

In 2006, Albertsons was purchased by a consortium of investors including Supervalu (which acquired 1100-plus Jewel, Acme, Shaw's, and Albertsons stores in southern California, the northwest, the intermountain areas, and Florida), Cerberus Capital (which acquired 600-plus Albertsons stores in Northern California, the Rocky Mountains, Florida, and Texas), and CVS (which acquired all standalone Osco, and Sav-on pharmacies).

Alme Construction



Alme Construction is an oilfield pipeline construction company that got its start back in 1968. As with any construction company, the number of employees Alme has depends on the amount of work coming in. Currently the construction company has around 20 employees, but

during extremely busy times it can have up to 70 employees.

Technology has made several advances in the energy industry, but the basic construction has stayed the same. Some of the services that Alme Construction provides include pipeline construction, excavation and dirt work, plant fabrication, pipeline maintenance, conventional boring and meter/well house fabrication.

Cenex Harvest States



With 7,000 employees around the world and 600 in Montana, 18 of those in Glacier County, it's no wonder that **Cenex Harvest States (CHS)** is one of Glacier County's top ten employers. A company as diversified as its employees, **CHS** is committed to providing essential resources that enrich

lives around the world. Those resources include energy, grains, food and food ingredients, crop nutrients and livestock feed. Glacier County is an important hub for Montana's wheat and barley production. Grain delivered to the **CHS** elevators in Cut Bank is transported by rail to customers in the U.S. and around the world, primarily along the Pacific Rim.

CHS operates petroleum refineries and pipelines as well as manufacturing, marketing and distribution of Cenex® brand refined fuels, lubricants, propane and renewable energy products. In addition to those who work in Glacier County, numerous **CHS** transportation drivers are involved in moving crude oil from the area to the refinery in Laurel.

A Fortune 200 company, **Cenex Harvest States** is owned by farmers, ranchers and cooperatives, along with thousands of preferred stockholders, across the United States.

Glacier Care Center



Glacier Care Center is one of the many long term senior care centers located in Montana owned by Lantis Enterprises. Company founder Will Lantis began his career in healthcare as a nursing home chemical salesman, but after witnessing the inferior care the seniors were receiving, Lantis decided he could do better and opened his first facility in Bridgeport, Nebraska.

One of the newer facilities, **Glacier Care Center** employs 54 people in the Cut Bank area. Allison Harvie, an Administrator for **Glacier Care Center**, has been in the healthcare industry in Cut Bank for 51 years and says it's the people who keep her coming back. "The people are so friendly; they're really what make it all worthwhile."

Glacier Care Center provides rehabilitative services such as physical, occupational and speech therapies as well as facility based care services, adult day care and a host of other services geared toward seniors. The facility also encourages its residents and employees to serve the local community to strengthen the bonds with Cut Bank.

Glacier Electric Coop



In August of 1945, five men-E.L. (Ernie) Anderson, Lester Gardner, G.K. Bilstad, James McAlpine, R.K. Vastine and Archie Corrigeaux-formed the Glacier County Electric Cooperative now known as **Glacier Electric Coop**. Though there was electric service in the area, rural farms and

homesteads were using six or 32 volt wind chargers with storage batteries to power their homes.

Now 64 years later, **Glacier Electric** has more than 1,800 miles of power lines, 7,100 meters and a workforce of more than 30 employees. As the energy industry continues to evolve, so does **Glacier Electric**. The advancements in technology are streamlining the delivery process as well as creating new opportunities for renewable generation. Because its members are its owners, **Glacier Electric** is a cornerstone in the local community. Like other cooperatives, **Glacier Electric** supports economic development by providing educational opportunities and sponsorship of community events, local businesses and scholarships.

As with many other industries, the electric cooperative workforce is aging and the need for new talented employees is growing. There are several fields within the industry, such as accounting, information technology, computer network services, electrical engineering, customer service, conservation and energy efficiency, communications and electrical lineman.



Glacier Park Inc.



President William Taft signed a bill that created Glacier National Park in May of 1910. Since then, millions of people have traveled from all over the globe to visit the park. Because of the distance many visitors travel, they need a place to stay during their visit, which is where **Glacier Park Inc.** comes in.

Glacier Park Inc. has a concession agreement with the National Park Service to provide lodging for the park's guests, public showers and/or laundry facilities for those who camp in the park, scenic and interpretive bus tours and food and beverage services. **Glacier Park Inc.** also runs several retail operations.

McDonalds



As the leading global foodservice retailer, **McDonalds** has more than 31,000 restaurants including the one in Cut Bank. The Cut Bank location opened its doors in 1990 and employs around 30 people at any given time.

Technology is also changing the way **McDonalds** serves its customers. New equipment makes it easier to serve people faster, a must have in the fast food industry. Though turnover is typically high in the food service industry, **McDonald's** manager Trish Mirador says there are ways to retain employees; "Making it a fun place to work and being as competitive as you can be with other employers can really make a difference when you're trying to keep your employees."

Despite the economic downturn, **McDonalds** continues to make a profit. Sales were up almost 2% in the U.S. during the third quarter of 2009. If you've ever wondered how many french fries **McDonalds** serves, the fast food giant puts out nine million pounds of fries a day.

Northern Ford



Although it's located in Cut Bank, **Northern Ford** deals with people from all over Montana and Canada. The dealership has 20 employees and has been in business for more than 30 years.

Technology is constantly changing in the automobile industry. Gone are the days when all a car had to do is get you from point A to point B. Now drivers can use their voice to change radio stations, the temperature in the car or make a phone call. "Before we had mechanics, now we have technicians that know more about computers than most people realize," says **Northern Ford** owner John Waller. "All engine components and many transmission components are computer controlled. These computer controls are making our cars more efficient and they last longer."

Waller also says having trained employees is the key to **Northern Ford's** success. "Hard working, well- trained people are worth more than gold to an employer." **Northern Ford** also sells golf carts and trailers.

Northern Rockies Medical Center



Northern Rockies Medical Center got its beginnings in the early 1900's when Dr. P.O. Neraal asked Myrtle McAfee, a homesteader who attended his patients in their homes, to purchase a building that could be used for a hospital. By the 1930's more space was required and though more

buildings were purchased, the Glacier County Commission eventually built Glacier Memorial Hospital and Nursing Home in 1948. By 1999, the County Commission determined it could no longer run the hospital and began the process of finding a private entity to run it. **Northern Rockies Medical Center** took over operation of the hospital in 2002.

Northern Rockies Medical Center has 85 employees who provide a variety of healthcare services to Glacier County. Spokeswoman Kandie Lemieux says it's the people that make a difference; "Everyone knows everyone else here, so when people come in our staff takes extra special care because they're our neighbors."

Technology plays a vital role in healthcare as it evolves. As new and innovative ways are created to treat patients, rural healthcare facilities like **Northern Rockies Medical Center** can provide more services.

Town Pump



The first **Town Pump** opened its doors in Butte in 1953. Today Montana-owned and operated **Town Pump** employs 2,402 people across the state and 75 in Glacier County. Once the newest location in the county opens, that number will jump to 95. "We see Glacier County as having a strong economy and a bright future, and so in keeping with our family business philosophy of reinvesting all income back into Montana, we build better and more accommodating locations," says **Town Pump** spokeswoman Maureen Kenneally.

Town Pump takes their philosophy of reinvesting in Montana a step further. The company's eighth annual charitable fundraising campaign began October 1 in locations throughout the state. As part of the campaign, the **Town Pump** Charitable Foundation will match up to \$300,000 in contributions to 53 Montana Food Banks through November 30. The foundation will match up to \$2,500 in both Browning and Cut Bank on behalf of the Blackfeet Food Bank Center and the Harvest Food Pantry. "Each year we have seen a growing number of Montanans struggling to make ends meet. While other charitable efforts have declined, we have seen an increase in support for our Montana Food Banks, proving that together we can make a difference," said Kenneally.

WE ARE MONTANANS REFLECTIONS



*Denise Juneau
Superintendent of Public Instruction*

*W*ith eight months at the helm of the Office of Public Instruction, State Superintendent Denise Juneau has already done a lot for Montana's public K-12 schools and she has more work planned to ensure that all students meet today's challenges and tomorrow's opportunities.

Juneau became the first American Indian to serve in a statewide executive level office when she became Superintendent of Public Instruction on January 5, 2009. She is an enrolled member of the Mandan-Hidatsa tribes and a descendant of the Blackfeet Tribe. She grew up and graduated from high school in Browning, MT on the Blackfeet Reservation. She previously served as a Division Administrator at OPI, overseeing the Indian Education for All program and working on student achievement issues. And now, she provides direction for all of the public education system in Montana.

"The Office of Public Instruction provides vision, advocacy, support, and leadership for schools and communities," said Juneau. "Our goal is to improve school-community relationships and student performance with communication tools and data-driven policy decisions."

OPI will continue to support the high-quality work already being accomplished by students and educators in Montana and will specifically target improving struggling schools across the state. Juneau knows firsthand what the classroom setting is like, both as a student and as a teacher, and understands that classroom instruction must be dynamic and engaging to ensure student learning. She taught high school English in both North Dakota and her hometown of Browning after graduating from Montana State University and the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She also has a law degree from the University of Montana.

Juneau's parents, also educators, continually impressed upon her how important a good education is and how far it can take a person. "When parents communicate regularly with their children's teachers, when they are familiar with homework assignments and the daily classroom routine, children know their education comes first, at home and at school. When teachers and parents work together, they can and do make a difference in the lives of children every day," said Juneau.

Schools all over Montana and across the United States opened their doors for another school year recently. Juneau looks forward to visiting schools and interacting with students, staff, and community members. In fact, she is planning a series of fall listening tours, dubbed "Communities Coming Together for Education", in which she hopes to foster good conversations between families, school staff and community groups about how, working together, communities can improve students' experience in school. In the future, Juneau will also visit schools, highlighting positive programs and meeting with students to hear more about their thoughts regarding their education system in a tour called "Meeting Montana's Future."

"We all believe that every child growing up in Montana deserves the very best education possible," said Juneau. "Encourage communities to come together on behalf of school kids; to find out what's working well and build on that, and to confront the challenges so that every child gets the opportunity to succeed."



Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau listens to the Great Falls High School symphonic band with GFHS Director of Bands Dusty Molyneaux during a visit to the school in May of 2009

GLACIER COUNTY: WHERE THE ROCKIES MEET THE PLAINS

Author: Aaron McNay

With a population of 13,297, Glacier County was Montana's 13th most populous county in 2008.

Since 2000, the population of Glacier County has remained relatively constant, increasing by only 100 people over the eight-year period. Due primarily to the Blackfeet Reservation, more than 60% of Glacier County's population is American Indian, which is the highest rate in the state. The largest city in Glacier County is Cut Bank, which had a population of 3,105 in 2008.

With nearly 2,310 people employed in 2008, the Public Administration sector is the largest employment industry in Glacier County. The Accommodation and Food Services, Retail Trade, and Health Care and Social Assistance are the largest private sector industries in the county. Combined, the four industries employ more than 80% of all non-agriculture workers in Glacier County.

The Public Administration sector is particularly important to Glacier County, due to the Blackfeet Reservation's tribal government being located within the county. With an average annual wage of nearly \$35,000 in 2008, the Public Administration sector pays an average wage that is slightly higher than the county average of \$31,265. The highest paying sector is the Utilities industry, which paid an average wage of \$63,563. The Information sector is the lowest paying

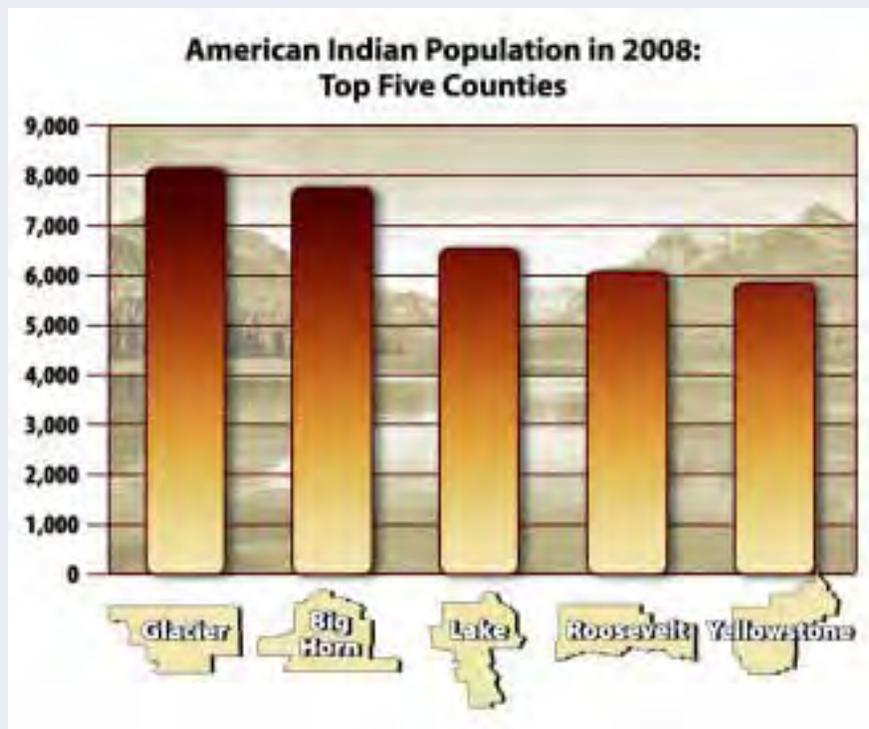
industry, where the average annual wage is slightly less than \$10,000.

From 2006 to 2007, the per capita income in Glacier County increased from \$24,188 to \$25,349, growing nearly 5% over the year. During the same period, the statewide per capita income growth rate was 7%. From 1969 to 2007, the per capita income in Glacier County increased at an average annual rate of 5.8%, slightly below the statewide growth rate of 6.2%. The consistent below average income growth in Glacier County has led to a per capita income level that is significantly below the 2007 statewide income level of \$33,225.



Aaron McNay, Economist

Just like Montana as a whole, agriculture production is a vital part of Glacier County's economy. In 2007, Glacier County had a total agriculture output of more than \$55 million, an increase of 40% since 2002. Nearly half of Glacier County's total agriculture value originated from the sale of cattle and calves, which generated \$24 million dollars in 2007. In addition, crop sales remain a vital segment of agriculture production in Glacier County. In fact, Glacier County ranks first in the state, and third in the country, in terms of the quantity of land devoted to the production of barley for grain.



MONTANA WEATHERING NATIONAL RECESSION

Author: Barb Wagner, Chief Economist

On December 1, 2008, the National Bureau for Economic Research (NBER), the organization that officially determines when a recession starts and ends, declared that the United States was in a recession that started in December 2007. From the start of the recession to August 2008, the U.S. unemployment rate increased by 4.7%, with losses of almost 6.9 million payroll jobs.

Montana's economy has performed well during this period of economic downturn, with an unemployment rate much lower than the national rate. Within Montana's borders, there are areas that have been battered by the national economic woes, particularly the northwestern portion of the state. Yet there are other regions where the economy has continued to grow, despite the national turmoil.



Barb Wagner



Figure 1: Montana and US Unemployment Rate, 1976 to August 2009

health of different regions within the state. **Figure 2** illustrates the impact of five different regions in Montana, with the northwest corner of Montana experiencing the highest unemployment rates. Northwest Montana's timber industry has been severely impacted by the deflation in the housing bubble and the resulting slowdown in demand for building products. Bozeman and the surrounding area, which relied heavily on the construction industry for income growth in recent years, has also been harmed by the burst of the housing bubble. The loss of income from the timber and construction industries has led to layoffs in retail and other consumer-based industries.

In contrast to the economic woes of western Montana, much of eastern and north central Montana has weathered the national recession fairly well. Agricultural commodity prices remained high through most of 2008, which supported the economies in many eastern and central Montana counties, as did continued energy development. Other industries that have thus far proved to be recession-proof include the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation industry, the Other Services industry, the Education and Health Services industry, and Government.

Figure 1 compares the unemployment rates since 1976 for the U.S. and Montana. Montana's unemployment rate in August was 6.6%, or 3.1% below the national rate. The cyclical nature of both the U.S. and Montana economies is one of the most prominent features of Figure 1, with the U.S. series having higher peaks and lower valleys than the Montana unemployment rate. The lower volatility of the Montana economy is also true in this most recent recession; the Montana unemployment rate has increased by only 2.8% since the start of the recession to August 2009, compared to an increase of 4.7% nationally.

However, there is a wide variation in the economic

This article is an abridged version of the 2009 Labor Day Report to the Governor. The full report is available at www.ourfactsyourfuture.org/publications.

Timing of the recession's recovery remains uncertain. The economic consulting firm Global Insight forecasts that Montana's employment levels will continue to decrease until the first quarter of 2010, with slow employment growth in the recovery. Global Insight does not expect Montana to regain its pre-recession employment level until the 3rd quarter of 2011. Other forecasts are more optimistic, with the Montana Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) and the Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) at the University of Montana predicting recovery starting in the fourth quarter of 2009. Montana's recovery depends both on the behavior of the national economy and on the economies of our trading partners overseas. Based on the strong performance of the Montana economy in the past few years, Montana will continue to outperform the nation in terms of job growth as we emerge from the recession.

Even though Montana is performing better than other states, and most counties have not been severely impacted by the recession, there are still a large number of Montanans that have been unemployed because of this recession. The July figures estimate an approximate 31,900 Montanans that are currently looking for work, an increase from the 2008 average of 22,700. The Montana Department of Labor and Industry and other agencies have worked hard to provide temporary support for these individuals until the economy recovers, providing unemployment benefits to over 53,000 unemployed workers in the last fiscal year. Unemployment benefits are vital to stabilizing our economy, preventing foreclosures, and stopping job losses from spreading to other industries.

Many of Montana's unemployed workers have used their unemployment period to receive additional education or job training. In the last fiscal year ending June 30, 2009, the Montana Department of Labor has assisted 2,305 individuals in finding appropriate employment or entering education and training curriculum to advance their careers when the economy recovers. Further, the Montana University System reports that enrollment in Montana's 2-year colleges has increased 11.1% in spring semester 2009 over spring of 2008. Not only are these individuals making the most of their unfortunate situation to improve their job and pay prospects for themselves, but improving the education and skills of our workforce also helps promote economic growth for all Montanans. High-skill workers are more productive and are more likely to develop new, innovative products and procedures that stimulate economic growth.



Governor Schweitzer and Signal Peak Mine owner Wayne Boich at the grand opening for the mine's new rail line near Roundup

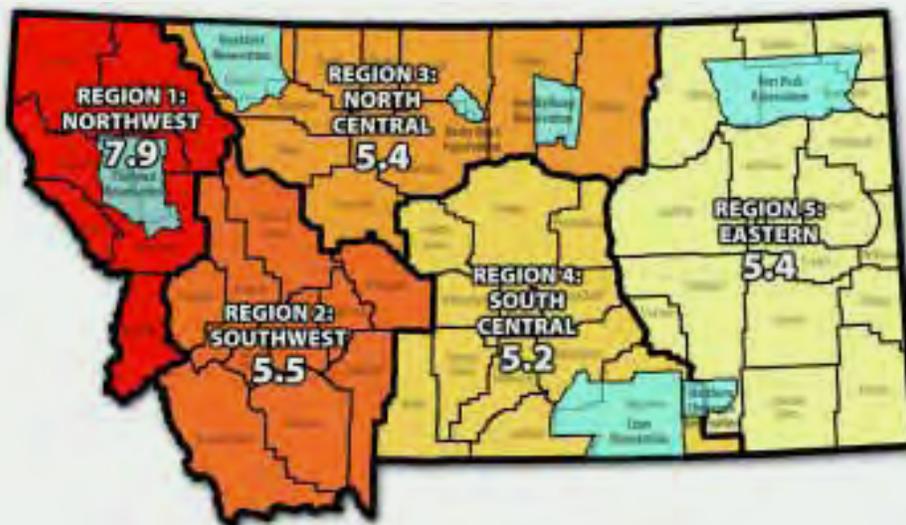


Figure 2: Montana Regional Unemployment Rates, July 2009

A FAMILY BUSINESS

Author: Casey Kyler-West

In 1978 Chuck and Gary Billman opened a lumber yard.

As their business became established in Cut Bank, father and son realized there was a need for an appliance, carpet and hardware store. In 2004, grandson Jeff joined the business and the family opened Billman's Home Décor, offering furniture, and home accessories.

Despite what's going on nationally, Billman's continues to flourish. "This is a great time to be in an isolated community like Cut Bank," says Jeff Billman. "You don't see the home foreclosures that are happening in other parts of the country. The only thing we've seen is that instead of buying the top of the line appliances, people are purchasing the economy brands."

Another advantage the Billmans have is they are not in direct competition with the major box stores. The closest box store is 110 miles away in Great Falls. While they do get customers from the surrounding towns, Billman's, along with the Chamber of Commerce and other businesses in Cut Bank, are trying to encourage people to shop locally rather than traveling to the larger communities for their big purchases. "Everybody works together here; for a small town, we have a lot to offer," says Billman.

Their proximity to the Canadian border also helps. While the majority of their Canadian business depends on the exchange rate, Billman's still sees an average of two to three Canadian customers a week.

In rural communities like Cut Bank, small businesses owners are involved in more than just the day to day business. Jeff Billman is the President of the Cut Bank Chamber of Commerce and his dad Gary sits on the hospital board.

While it can sometimes be a challenge separating the businessman from the neighbor, Billman says he likes the



The Billman Family: Gladys, Gary and Jeff

fact you know everybody in the community; "It's nice doing business with people you know and trust."

Billman's also has a low turnover rate with its employees. When asked about the key to retaining employees, Billman says it's all about the atmosphere. "We really try to keep a positive atmosphere, we're a family business and if you treat people well and have competitive pay your employees will stick around." Because the labor pool is limited, Billman adds that when there are job openings, it can be a challenge to fill them.

When asked about the secret to the store's success, Billman says it's no secret; "Giving good customer service and competitive pricing are the key to our success." Billman's is continuing to grow. While there are no plans in the future for another location, they do need more warehouse space and would like to expand the service department.



Billman's in Cut Bank

BLACKFEET TRADING POST

Author: Casey Kyler-West



Faught's Blackfeet Trading Post, Browning, MT

Those driving to the East Entrance of Glacier National Park can't help but notice Faught's Department Store as they pass through Browning. In fact, many stop and see what the store has to offer.

Also known as the Blackfeet Trading Post, the store has been in business for nearly 70 years. Brian Elliott, a former Wrangler salesman, heard the store was for sale and bought back in 1967. I think living on the reservation is one of the things I've really enjoyed about being here," says Elliott.

As with any store that carries clothing, Faught's has had to stay on top of the fashion trends. "We've evolved a lot in 40 years," says Elliott. "We have a few staples like jeans and boots, but fashion changes quickly so we have to keep up with the trends."

Faught's has more in its inventory than clothes. Other items the store sells are Indian related items that include handmade artifacts such as beadwork, and headdresses that are popular with the tourists. "We have to continually look at other opportunities and other products to make it exciting for our customers," says Elliott.

With a growing inventory, Faught's had to move from its original location which was only six-thousand square feet into its current spot which is 12,000 square feet. "That was really exciting and probably one of the store's biggest events," says Elliott.

Although Faught's is on the way to Glacier National Park, tourists make up about 30% of the store's clientele. The majority of its customers are from the reservation. "We have a different clientele and that makes us different from the rest of the state. The Blackfeet have traditions and values that we honor and support. We have to be real attuned to what our customers' needs are," says Elliott.

With 12 fulltime and part-time positions, Faught's recruits many employees from the local high school. Because it's often their first job, the students learn skills they'll need as they continue on in the workforce. In order to stay competitive, Faught's pays its employees well and offers benefits in an effort to retain them.

Despite the fact that Elliott is 71 and has turned the business over to his daughter, he still enjoys being at in the store. "The people here support us so well, this really is the best place to live and the people are the most enjoyable to work with," says Elliott.



Customers shopping in Faught's



Clothing Department

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

Author: Marieke Beck, Attorney, Office of Legal Services, MT Department of Labor and Industry

Disabilities are a fact of life. When a person is or becomes disabled, he or she may need a reasonable accommodation in order to remain active in the workforce. With an effective reasonable accommodation, an employee with a disability can perform the essential functions of the job and enjoy the same benefits and privileges of other non-disabled employees. Montana's employers and employees need to be aware of their rights and responsibilities when it comes to the provision of reasonable accommodations. But how do you figure out the right reasonable accommodation? The answer lies in a meaningful interactive dialogue.

An "interactive dialogue" or "interactive process" is an opportunity for the employer and the employee to have a discussion. The parties can discuss the essential functions of the job and to take a look at how a person's disability may impact the ability to perform those functions. With this in mind, they can begin to look at different ways to address the need for an accommodation. In some cases, both the disability and the type of accommodation required will be obvious. If so, an in-depth dialogue will not be necessary. In other situations, the employer may need to gather more information concerning the nature of the disability and the individual's functional limitations in order for the parties identify an effective accommodation. Fortunately, there are extensive resources out there to assist.

Recently, the Department of Labor and Industry's Human Rights Bureau revamped its webpage (www.montanadiscrimination.com). Here, you can find information and several links to the disability discrimination statutes, administrative rules, and other resources. At the home page, click on the section marked "For Employers" and learn more. Another free resource that is out there is the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), which assists employers, people with disabilities, rehabilitation professionals, and other to improve the employability of people with disabilities (www.jan.wvu.edu). Similarly, there is Rocky Mountain DBTAC. Their mission is to provide information and resources on the Americans with Disabilities Act to individuals and organizations in this region. (www.adainformation.org).

The resources above discuss several key steps that the parties can take to ensure a meaningful interactive dialogue:

- Discuss the essential functions of the job (a good job description is a great first step) or the privileges or benefits that are inaccessible, such as access to a break room;
- Discuss how the employee's impairment impacts the ability to perform the essential functions of the job (this may require gathering more information);
- Bring ideas to the table about how to accommodate the impairment (it might be helpful to contact a neutral third party resource, such as JAN, and get their input.)
- Select and implement a reasonable accommodation; and then
- Monitor the accommodation to ensure that it is and remains effective.

When an employer becomes aware of the need for an accommodation, it is important to address the matter promptly. Of course, it could be that the parties proceed through a good faith interactive process and realize that there is no reasonable accommodation that would allow the employee to continue with his or her employment. However, a meaningful dialogue will certainly increase the odds of finding a perfectly reasonable accommodation that will serve the interests of both parties.



UI MODERNIZATION

Author: Rachel Bawden, Operations Research Analyst, Unemployment Insurance Division

For the past year, Montana's unemployed workers have been able to receive federally funded unemployment insurance benefits once their state funded, regular benefits ended. Congress authorized a number of expanded unemployment insurance programs that were adopted by Governor Brian Schweitzer and the 2009 Montana Legislature.

In November of 2008, Congress increased the Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC08) program from 13 to 20 weeks of benefits for unemployed workers and added 13 more weeks under EUC08 Tier Two. Unemployed workers can file for these benefits up through December 2009. Payments can be made through May of 2010, when the program officially terminates. This program is 100% federally funded and does not impact the Montana UI Trust Fund.

Three areas adopted by the 2009 State Legislature and signed into law by Governor Schweitzer through House Bill 645 allowed the state to access \$19 million in federal funds to pay for the expanded benefits. Those areas include the Alternate Base Period, the ability of claimants to seek part-time work, and the ability to offer benefits to individuals who have exhausted their unemployment benefits, yet are in training and trying to complete their coursework. Once the federal funding is depleted, the individual states are responsible for the benefit cost.

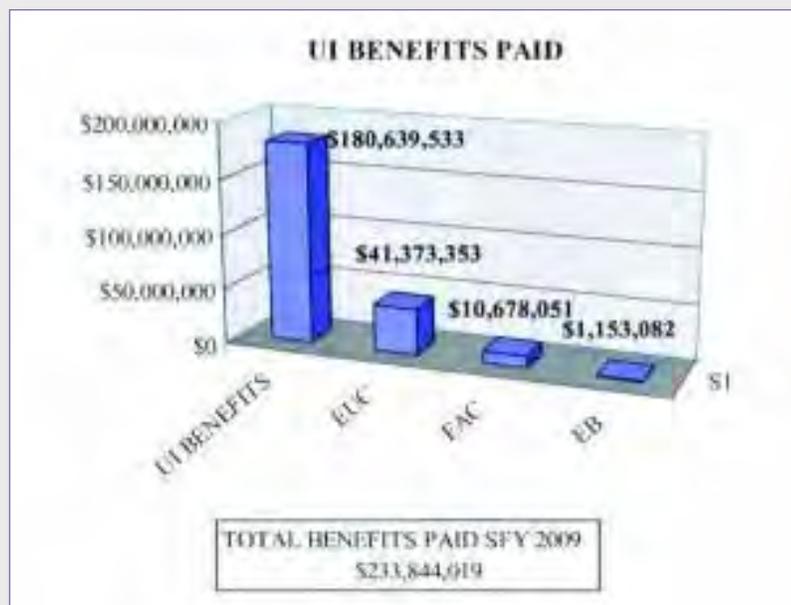
The Alternate Base Period (ABP) option provides for another method of qualification to determine monetary eligibility. Historically, claimant's monetary eligibility was determined by the amount of wages earned in the first four calendar quarters of the last five completed calendar quarters. The new ABP provision allows the use of the last four completed calendar quarters as the base period.

The part-time worker provision allows individuals who worked the majority of their base period in part-time work to be able to seek a comparable number of hours in part-time work. This provision recognizes the large number of employees who are working part-time and those employers who are only able to offer part-time employment.

The third provision allows the state UI program to offer additional benefits to an individual who was separated from a declining occupation to receive unemployment compensation while enrolled in a training program. With the adoption of this new regulation, UI is able to provide up to 26 weeks of additional benefits to a person attending training to improve their skills and move to a more sustainable occupation.

Congress also expanded the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program by expanding the Department of Treasury's contribution of the Health Coverage Tax Credit and by incorporating service-impacted industries instead of just product-impacted industries. The duration of additional benefits also increased, as well as the wage subsidy limitations. The final change allows a claimant to remain on TRA if their new Unemployment Insurance benefits decrease when they are forced to file a new UI claim to redetermine eligibility.

All the benefit expansions help both Montana workers and employers. They provide much needed benefits to unemployed workers that may not have otherwise been eligible for benefits during the downturn in our economy. At the same time, Montana businesses benefit because those dollars are spent in local Montana communities. Local economies are stabilized and good skilled workers stay in the community, ready and available to return to work as the economy strengthens.



2009 GOVERNOR'S SAFETY AWARD WINNERS

Lieutenant Governor John Bohlinger and Labor Commissioner Kelly recognized eight Montana Businesses for their commitment to excellence in workplace safety and health, with the 2009 Governor's Safety and Health Award. "These businesses are making safety part of their culture, something we hope all Montana businesses will do," said Labor Commissioner Kelly.

The Governor's Safety Award has eight categories; the following businesses won the award for their category:

Most Innovative Safety & Health Solution Award:
Great Falls Pre-Release Services, Inc.

Corporate Winner:
CDM Federal Programs Corporation, Libby, MT

Large Private:
Glendive Medical Center, Glendive, MT

Small Private:
Loveland Products, Inc., Billings, MT

Large Public:
Yellowstone County, Billings, MT

Small Public:
Granite County Nursing Home, Philipsburg, MT

Large Mining:
Holcim Inc. Trident Plant, Three Forks, MT

Small Mining:
Westmoreland-Savage Mine, Savage, MT

The purpose of the Governor's Award is to not only recognize the businesses where safety is a priority but also to promote greater awareness of workplace safety and health issues across the state and offer the opportunity for leaders to share model programs.



UPCOMING EVENTS



Photo Courtesy of the late Stu Miller

Upcoming Career Fairs:

Livingston Job Fair

Friday November 20, 2009

10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Park County Fairgrounds

For more information contact the Livingston Job Service at 406-222-0520

17th Annual Employer Expo

Tuesday, April 6, 2010

11:00 am to 4:30 pm

McLaughlin Center, University of Great Falls, 1301 20th St S, Great Falls, MT

For more information contact:

Barbara Hardy at 791-5816 or email: bhardy@mt.gov

Opportunity Knocks! Western Montana's Premier Job Fair

April 15, 2010

For more information contact the Missoula Job Service at 406-728-7060

Innovation in Business Conference

May 19-21, 2010

Crowne Plaza in Billings, MT

42,000 copies of this public document were printed at an estimated cost of \$.38 each for a total of \$15,960.00 for printing and \$.00 for distribution.

Safety Conferences and Training

Annual LEPC / MSSC Safety

The Montana Safety Services Council will be holding its 15th Annual LEPC / MSSC Safety Conference on February 10 and 11, 2010, at the Holiday Inn Grand Montana in Billings, Montana. The theme will be "The Economics of Safety."

For more information, please call (406) 248-4893 or email joann@aeht.org.

Montana SafetyFest

The week of March 22, 2010 at the University Of Montana Helena College Of Technology

There will be safety classes and other training opportunities, more Details to come!

For more information go to www.WorkSafeMT.com

Check out our extended menu of events on
<https://app.mt.gov/cal/html/event?eventCollectionCode=doli>



Montana
Department of Labor and Industry

PO Box 1728 Helena MT 59624-1728
www.dli.mt.gov

PRESORT STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR AND INDUSTRY
HELENA MT
PERMIT NO. G-59

