FALL 2006

Main Street MONTANA

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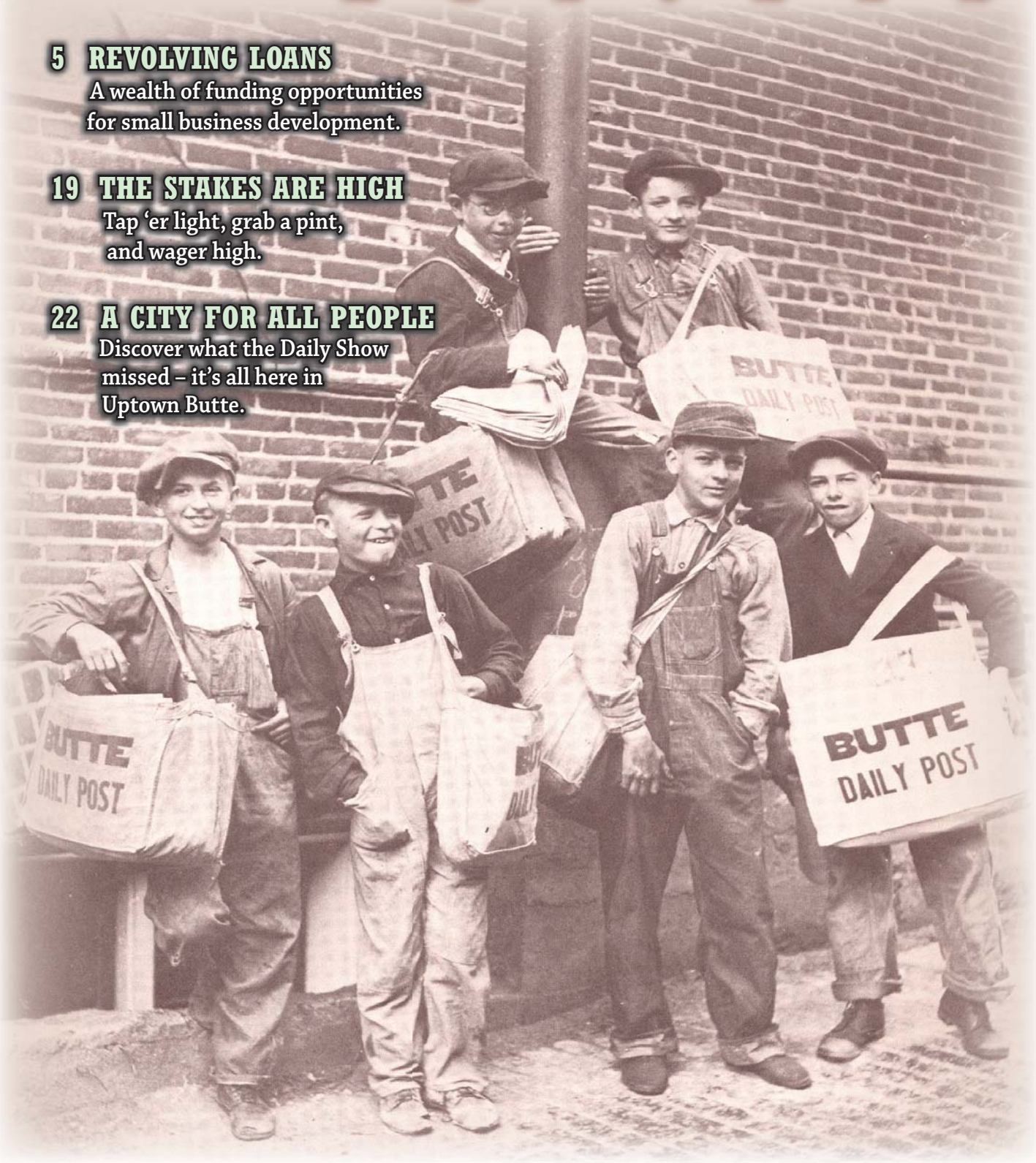
A wealth of funding opportunities for small business development.

19 THE STAKES ARE HIGH
Tap 'er light, grab a pint, and wager high.

22 A CITY FOR ALL PEOPLE
Discover what the Daily Show missed – it's all here in Uptown Butte.



Welcome to our third issue of the newly revised Main Street Montana magazine. The Governor's Office of Economic Development is proud to highlight the work that we do with Montana's state and local entities in support of business expansion, retention, and recruitment in our communities.

In this fall edition of *Main Street Montana* we are highlighting my town: Butte, America. During my 27 years of working with Butte folks, including 18 years in direct economic development, I developed a great appreciation for the benefits that can come from strong partnerships between local businesses, local development efforts and the State of Montana. We hope that *Main Street Montana* continues to illustrate for Montana businesses how their potential can be turned into shining realities.

The above photo of Butte in 1939, *"Gas 18 cents"*, discloses an opportunity for many areas in Montana where, at a time of $75 a barrel oil and $3 a gallon gas, energy development is a target for good jobs and growth. Fortuitously, most of those energy-rich areas are in Montana counties that have suffered severe economic dislocation and out-migration for decades, and revival will be welcomed.

We hope that the successes of Butte in the face of adversity will serve as inspiration for other communities across Montana who might feel they have insurmountable development obstacles. Butte has a long and at times tumultuous history, but the "never-say-die" people of Butte continue to dream big and work hard in the face of an increasingly competitive global economy and a complex world. In this publication we will continue to celebrate the successes of our Montana communities and encourage you to share your stories with us at **MainStreet@mt.gov.**

Evan Barrett, Chief Business Officer
Governor's Office of Economic Development

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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 serve 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 Montana Promotion Division (Travel Montana and the Montana Film Office) is the statewide film and tourism development and promotion program provided by the Montana Department of Commerce. Travel Montana serves the people of Montana with programs designed to develop and promote Montana as an attractive destination for visitors from around the world. The Montana Film Office promotes the state as a location for feature films, commercials, television, documentaries, music videos, and still photography by providing information, scouting, and support services to the motion picture industry.

The Research & Analysis Bureau gathers data, performs research and analysis, hosts the Montana Career Information System, produces career and economic publications, and disseminates information on the State's industry and occupational employment activities such as wages, unemployment, and employment at **www.ourfactsyourfuture.org**.

The Employment Relations Division provides services and regulation for Montana's workers' compensation system and for industrial safety. Workers' compensation insurance and industrial safety and health programs are essential tools in maintaining a strong and healthy work environment for all Montanans.

The Housing Division and the Montana Board of Housing provides policy direction to the agency staff, authorizes bond issues, approves development financing, and evaluates Board Housing Programs. These programs include the Single Family Program, the Montana House, Multifamily Loan Programs, Section 8, Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program and the Reverse Annuity Mortgage (RAM) Program.

The Unemployment Insurance Division (UID) provides technical assistance and guidance to unemployed workers and employers to process and pay benefit claims and file quarterly wage reports in an accurate, efficient and timely manner. Unemployment Insurance is financed by employers and held in trust for workers when they are unemployed through no fault of their own.

Editors: Andrew Geiger (Commerce), Margaret Ore (DLI), Michelle Robinson (DLI), and Christie Wolfe (Commerce)

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REVOLVING LOANS

Author: Pam Cote

Small businesses drive Montana's economy, creating jobs, expanding the tax base, and helping communities grow. The State of Montana understands the value of fostering growth for our small businesses and has an ample toolbox of resources. Available for Montana's businesses are Tax Increment Finance Districts, Business Improvement Districts, Revolving Loan Funds (RLFs), and other miscellaneous funds created randomly around the state from a variety of sources. Increasingly, we are seeing local economic development organizations offer RLFs to foster business growth. A revolving loan fund is a source of money from which loans are made for small business development projects and as repayments are made, funds become available for new loans to other businesses.

Revolving loan funds support retention and expansion with flexible, locally controlled funds. These pro-business programs provide a source of financing that may not otherwise be available within the community for local expansion or start-up business. Often they are used to fill a financing gap in a business development project. Although the RLF is not the primary source of financing for a project, the combination of public and private financing reduces the risk for the primary lender (by decreasing their exposure) and yields an overall lower cost of money for the borrower. Because RLFs are subsidized or administered by government agencies, many RLFs offer lower interest rates than conventional loans.

Most government financing programs require that jobs be created in direct proportion to the amount of public dollars loaned in a project. A revolving loan fund may provide incentives for job creation to businesses locating or expanding in the community.

Montana has a variety of local and regional revolving loan funds that have been capitalized from a number of sources. For example, micro-business loans for up to $35,000 are available to Montana-based businesses with 10 or fewer employees and gross annual revenue of less than $500,000. These revolving loan funds are administered through non-profit Micro-Business Development Corporations (MBDCs), which are funded through a loan program at the Department of Commerce and are located throughout Montana **http://businessresources.mt.gov/BRD_mbfp_map.asp**.

Some other significant funding sources are the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) through the Commerce Economic Development Loan Fund, USDA's Rural Business Services Intermediary Re-lending program (IRP), the Economic Development Administration revolving loan funds, and the Big Sky Economic Development revolving loan fund.

CDBG funds are granted by the Department of Commerce to local governments who generally contract with local development corporations to administer the subsequent loans to local businesses. The funds are repaid and managed as a local or regional revolving loan fund available to other eligible area businesses. Many MBDCs manage Commerce CDBG loan funds.

The Montana Board of Investments offers a revolving loan fund match, lending money at 1% for up to 30 years to a local development organization to provide a match for an IRP. Visit at **http://www.mtfinanceonline.com/boiprograms.asp.**

The federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants funds to development corporations to capitalize revolving loan funds. The funds are loaned to eligible local businesses at low fixed rates in conjunction with other financing sources.

The Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund **http://businessresources.mt.gov/BRD_Trustfund.asp** is our newest contributor to local RLFs. This trust fund was created by the 2005 Montana Legislature and one of the major components of Governor Schweitzer's 2005 legislative agenda. The Trust Fund was created to aid in the development of good-paying jobs for Montana residents and promotes long-term, stable economic growth in Montana. Earnings (interest only, not principal) from the Trust Fund are available for financial assistance to local governments and economic development organizations through application to the Montana Department of Commerce.

The best course of action for a business wanting to learn more about local loan funds in its area is to contact the appropriate local development and regional development organizations for more information. You can find the contact information by visiting our Montana local development agency database at **http://business.mt.gov.** The Governor's Economic Development Office is always a resource for your business. Call us at 406-444-5634 - we can put you in touch with the people you need to finance your business.

PRESIDENTIAL FREEDOM SCHOLARSHIPS

Author: Kathy Bean

Each year the Montana Governor's Commission on Community Service provides a $500 matching scholarship in support of the Presidential Freedom Scholarship that acknowledges student volunteer service work and civic engagement.

Scholarships are made available through the Governor's Office of Community Service with funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service Presidential Freedom Scholarship and a partnership with the Student Assistance Foundation of Montana, which provides a $25,000 matching grant.

The Governor's Office of Community Service registered a total of 40 students (two students per school – junior or senior class) in Montana who will receive a $1,000 scholarship to attend one of Montana's public, private, community or technical colleges. Applications for awards were submitted to the Governor's Office of Community Service by the high school principal or counselor before May 1 of this year.

Out of the 40 compiled applications, 35 students were in their senior year and 5 students were juniors. One student from Big Fork volunteered for a Red Cross Blood Drive, community decorating at the Big Fork Elves, fire and ambulance cadet, Big Fork nursing home, Invisible Children Uganda, Relay for Life and numerous other organizational events.

In recognition as stewards of community service, students received a signed certificate from Governor Schweitzer. "These students are the role models for future generations," said Governor Schweitzer. "I am proud to help honor students who give so much of their time to their communities."

Jennifer Bernhardt, whose daughter Randi Diercks has received scholarship notification, discussed the effects of volunteerism on their family. "If people didn't volunteer, our daughter would not be alive today." Jennifer's one year old daughter Mackenzie was choking on food and losing her oxygen supply. The volunteer ambulance crew responded to the emergency and saved Mackenzie's life. These event made such an impression on her older sister Randi that years later (unbeknownst to the family) Randi took it upon herself to solicit donations raising over $2,000 for this same ambulance crew which was facing financial crisis. Upon seeing her older sister's example, Mackenzie, who is now seven, has held her own fundraisers for "the sick kids" (St. Jude's Children Fund) and the "School for Mexican Children." Mom Jennifer stated, "I hope this encourages others to volunteer."

Students in Montana are making a positive difference in their communities. The Presidential Freedom Scholarship publicly applauds their efforts and challenges each recipient to continue the selfless gift of volunteering. If you would like more information or would like to nominate a candidate for the Presidential Freedom Scholarship 2007, please contact Kathy Bean by phone, (406) 444-5547 or by e-mail, **kbean@mt.gov**.

WARM HOMES HEATS UP WITH AMERICORPS

Author: Jono McKinney, MCC Executive Director

The 95 degree afternoon breeze provided only mild relief for the seven Montana Conservation Corps members who were working up on Big Butte last summer. During the hottest two-weeks ever recorded in Butte history, the Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) crew, made up of seven AmeriCorps members, built over a mile of jack-leg fence to protect the new hiking and biking area in Butte's newest open space park. "The crew was fantastic," said Cindy McIlveen of the Butte-Silver Bow Planning Department who supervised the Big Butte project. "I hope to involve MCC on as many projects as possible."

MCC will be back in Butte this fall, but Big Butte will have to wait until next summer for further maintenance. In October, rather than with fence posts and hammers in hand, the crew will come with energy efficient light bulbs and window-insulation kits. In collaboration with the Governor's Office of Community Service, the Department of Public Health and Human Services, and the District XII Human Resource Council, these AmeriCorps members will be in the Butte area to install winterization measures in the homes of low income residents.

Photo credit: Rion Sanders, Great Falls Tribune

In 2005, in response to skyrocketing energy costs following Hurricane Katrina, Governor Schweitzer launched Warm Homes Montana. "The upcoming winter season with the significant increase in the cost of energy is rapidly approaching a crisis for many of our less fortunate neighbors," said Schweitzer. "By making Montanan's homes more efficient, there will be a lasting impact on these families and bring them hope that they will be warm during the cold."

Through its AmeriCorps affiliation with the Governor's Office of Community Service, MCC mobilized its national service volunteers to assist with the Warm Homes effort. Linda Carlson, Executive Director of the Office of Community Service stated, "Montana's AmeriCorps members are meeting needs in Montana in the areas of literacy, human needs, information technology, homeland security, and the environment. It was a perfect match for our programs to help out with the Warm Homes effort."

Even as it had crews in Louisiana in October helping with Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts, MCC was able to deploy AmeriCorps members in 79 communities across Montana and provide weatherization assistance in 600 homes. Working in teams of two or three, MCC members installed reusable window insulation kits, weatherstripping around doors, energy-efficient lightbulbs, hot water heater wraps, carbon monoxide and smoke alarms, and other items provided by the Human Resource Councils.

"MCC's assistance with Warm Homes complements the more comprehensive home weatherization services the Human Resource Councils currently offer," said Dennis Osselo, Energy Division Manager for the District XII Human Resource Council in Butte. "With MCC's help, we can widen our web of support to include so many more families." Statewide, nearly 1700 homes are on a waiting list for full-scale weatherization through the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP), which gets state and federal funding. This year, MCC crews will spend four weeks in the Butte-Silver Bow district – an area that stretches 120 miles in any direction and includes six counties, among them Montana's largest, Beaverhead County – helping low income homeowners with simple, low or no-cost weatherization measures.

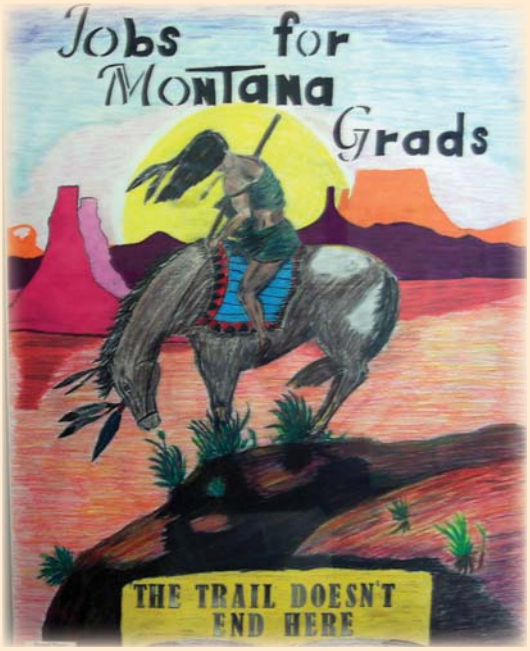
This year, MCC members will be working with every Human Resource Council in the state and visiting hundreds of communities, including each of Montana's seven Indian Reservations. MCC's goal, with 45 crew weeks scheduled with the Warm Homes initiative, is to provide winterization assistance and education in over 1,800 homes.

"Warm Homes Montana is about extending the web of community, about neighbors helping neighbors to make it through our tough winters," says Kane Quenemoen, Human Services Manager of Weatherization/LIEAP programs at the Department of Public Health and Human Services. "With help from MCC's AmeriCorps members and the initiative of our HRDC weatherization leaders, we were able to kick this effort into high gear from the get-go to get the most benefit for the most people on a very tight budget."

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION

Author: Michelle Robinson

"A real eye-opener for me (in JMG) was when I completed a mock-interview in front of my peers," recalled Ernie Flynn. "I had absolutely no interview skills whatsoever. It dawned on me that I certainly didn't get my after school job based on my interviewing abilities. It was more like they needed a warm body to wash dishes."



Designed by Jhameil Moore, Havre High

Flynn, an enrolled Assiniboine Sioux of Fort Peck, was a senior when he first became introduced to the Jobs for Montana's Graduates (JMG) program while attending the Project for Alternative Learning (PAL) in Helena. "I was a bit of a free spirit. Transferring to PAL from Capital High gave me more of what I needed. PAL offered a buffet of classes for us to pick and choose that fit more of my learning style." However, when the school said he should consider taking the JMG program, he reluctantly agreed to join. "There were 14 of us in my class and we were all thinking, who is this 'outsider' coming in to teach us job skills," he said.

"In retrospect, it was one of the best decisions I made. I always knew I wanted to go to college, I just didn't know for what or how I was going to do it." Armed with a BS degree in Rehabilitation and Related Services from Montana State University Billings (1996), he embarked upon a career as a youth counselor for emotionally disturbed kids. "I worked part-time, because my wife Wendy and I had just had our baby boy. We were sharing parental responsibilities. I carried odd hours to make sure she had time to pursue her career as well. That is when I saw an opportunity to work with Crown Bolt (a Southern California fastener company that supplies hardware to Home Depot throughout the nation). I interviewed, got the job and have been with them for nearly nine years." Today, as Senior Merchandiser, Flynn finds himself hitting the road about 80% of the time to check in on the six Home Depot stores that Crown Bolt services.

Jesse James Courville, a Confederated Salish-Kootenai tribal member and 2005 JMG graduate of St. Ignatius (Flathead reservation) originally dropped out in his junior year. "I wanted to be a Marine, but didn't qualify due to the mistakes I made in my life. I lived in such a small town, everyone knew of my 'failure'. I had to get out, isolate myself from everyone who cared for me. I made plans to go to another school in another town, but my habits had something else in mind and it certainly wasn't school," said Courville.

Jesse James Courville

"I had no job. I lived in a smoky, alcoholic haze for months, sleeping in friends' basements and sometimes not eating. I needed to graduate from high school," he said. After making a series of bad choices, Courville made a life-changing decision to go back to school. With the help of his JMG Specialist, Jesse joined the JMG class and got his life on track. His new choices included attending the Career Development Conference and taking third place in the Public Speaking Competition, where he shared his story of struggle and triumph. Today, Jesse is proud to serve in the "the most feared and respected fighting force in the world," he claims as a United States Marine. "I would not have been able to succeed had I not gone back to school and been involved with JMG."

Ernie and Jesse are merely two of the hundreds of success stories that JMG has witnessed in the last 16 years since its inception in high school classrooms throughout the state. At a time when high school dropout rates headline the news at both state and national

Ernie Flynn

levels, the Department of Labor and Industry's Jobs for Montana's Graduates program has been forging pathways of success, particularly in schools either on or bordering reservations, or serving urban American Indian students.

In school year 2004-2005, JMG served 62 underclass American Indian students and 71 seniors identified as having significant barriers to completing high school and continuing on to higher education or gainful employment. 100% of the senior students participating in JMG graduated (see data table).

"Reservation youth cannot apply for an after-school job at McDonald's because there isn't one," said enrolled Crow tribal member Reno Charette, Indian Affairs Coordinator for Governor Schweitzer. "JMG exposes students to a world of existing opportunities when all the data tells you opportunity doesn't exist on Montana's reservations. In this case, 71 families are impacted -knowing their relatives will move forward with a career that can potentially address the issues of poverty and unemployment on our reservations."

Performance Outcome	JAG	JMG Statewide Results	JMG On & Serving Reservation Schools
Graduation Rate	90%	96.10%	100.0%
Positive Outcome	80%	81.94%	83.10%
Non-Senior Return to School	70%	87.59%	91.23%

"Growing up on the reservation, I remember many of my former classmates had challenging home lives that made it difficult to perform to capacity at school," said Major Robinson, enrolled Northern Cheyenne tribal member and Economic Development Specialist in the Governor's Office of Economic Development. "Expectations for students to perform, without any comprehension of the cultural challenges we faced, led to several of my peers dropping out."

Former Culbertson JMG Specialist Sherry Savely agrees. "Many of my Indian students are uncomfortable with eye contact, a firm handshake and interviewing," she said. "It delighted me to hear one of my seniors inform me that he got the job because he did what he learned in class. It may seem like a small step to some, but this was monumental to us."

JMG focuses efforts on students facing multiple barriers to graduation. "We recognize the plight that comes with economic disadvantage, low academic performance, excessive absences and lack of marketable occupational skills," said State Coordinator Drea Brown. "We place value and importance on the abilities each young person possesses and ultimately help them to discover the knowledge and tools they will need to create a successful future."

JMG's curriculum targets six core areas: Career Development, Job Attainment, Job Survival, Basic Math & Writing, Leadership & Development and Personal Skills including topics such as identifying value systems and decision making. This is accomplished through classroom work, job shadowing, career and interest assessments, mock interviews, and participation in the Montana Career Association. Through the Association, students who may not regularly engage in extracurricular activities are given the opportunity to hold offices and participate in leadership activities.

"We build portfolios, practice communication skills, conduct mock interviews, become resource seekers (rather than relying strictly on the Internet), and we learn that the best teamwork comes in the form of service work to others," said Savely.

Jobs for Montana Graduates (JMG) began in 1990 as a solution to the dropout rates experienced in Montana's high schools. Today, JMG supports a network of 41 programs offering 794 students the potential for future career development by focusing on staying in school and finding a career path suited to their interests and abilities. Most recently JMG was recognized by the National Jobs for America's Graduates for achieving "5 for 5" status in performance outcomes.

"As tribal people, we rely on and respect the visions of our ancestors. JMG provides our youth the opportunity to see the future and live their dreams," said Robinson. To learn more about the Jobs for Montana Graduates program contact Drea Brown at (406) 444-0978 or by visiting their website at **http://montana.jag.org**.

OF BELIEVERS

TURNING A HOUSE INTO A HOME

Author: Andrew Geiger

Public policy discussions about housing might at first seem to be straightforward, until you start to peel back the layers and see all of what goes into maximizing the number of people who have access to suitable housing, a central pillar of the American Dream. From addressing the most basic need of providing shelter to those who are going without, to helping young families hurdle the obstacles standing between themselves and their first homes, the Housing Division in the Montana Department of Commerce and the Montana Board of Housing (MBOH) takes a close look at the foundation and structure of all the issues to ensure we are providing innovative solutions to the age old challenge of securing a roof over one's head. "A hundred years ago less than half of Americans owned their own home, and it was F.D.R., in the heart of the Depression, who made homeownership for everyone a priority," Governor Brian Schweitzer said. "Today in Montana, our homeownership rate stands above the national average at around 70%, yet we still need to be creative to see that the next generation of Montanans can continue to reach even greater heights."

Bruce Brensdal, Executive Director

The Montana Board of Housing serves the housing needs of Montana's low and moderate-income population by providing financing for the development or rehabilitation of the state's affordable housing stock, as well as low-interest loans for first-time homebuyers through the Homeownership Program. Since 1977, the MBOH has served 40,000 Montana families by financing nearly $2.5 billion for affordable homeownership and multi-family housing units.

Bruce Brensdal, Executive Director of the MBOH, sounds philosophical when talking about housing issues. He describes one's house as being such a constant presence and central part of our lives that it is in its ubiquity we sometimes take housing for granted. "Quality housing is the core ingredient to our realizing a full human potential and being able to care for our families," Brensdal said. "We need healthcare, abundant and nutritious food, and good paying jobs, but all of those become hard to obtain without first having met our need for shelter. Maslow got it exactly right," he added, in reference to the famous psychologist's 'Hierarchy of Needs' that shows health and security as the first steps needed before further human development. In an empathy exercise, Brensdal asks people to think of what it would be like if their home, and all of its contents, suddenly vanished--a task made easier for a nation that witnessed the aftermath of Katrina.

In 1944, President Franklin Roosevelt made housing a part of his 'Second Bill of Rights,' which included language stating that *every American is entitled to decent housing*. The economics of the issue show there is a larger public benefit to be reaped by assisting those struggling to achieve this most basic human need. When you tackle the issue of homelessness, people can begin being productive members of society. Furthermore, encouraging homeownership increases national fiscal strength, as housing starts have propped up other sagging economic sectors for the last several years. Homeowners are also more likely to start a business by using their home as collateral. A recent study from the Center for Applied Economic Research at MSU-Billings shows that for every dollar invested in housing in Montana, $1.45 of benefit is derived; and for every $1 million invested, 245 jobs are created.

The housing picture in Montana is a tale of two extremes. The split is not east/west, but rather those places with a growing population and those without. While we think of rapid growth in places like the Flathead and Gallatin valleys (which have the highest median home prices), growth is consistent throughout most of the western part of the state; and places like Miles City are seeing increased housing costs that have local residents scratching their heads. The most drastic housing situation in eastern Montana is in booming Sidney, where an influx of the growing workforce has made housing options slight. The various programs in the Housing Division work together in a patchwork fashion to plug the holes that communities face. The core strength of these programs is a recognition that owning a home is in many cases the largest investment people will make, thus providing families equity that increases financial options for rainy days. As but one example, the Reverse Annuity Mortgage (RAM) program allows qualifying seniors to receive low interest loans on their home that do not need to be repaid until the home is sold.

Brensdal says that while the professional background of former and current board members varies, their common principle is a heartfelt passion to provide options to their local area and the larger Montana community. The term *Homestead* has a particular resonance in Montana, and as we move forward to write the next chapter of our state's history, we are strengthened by the hard work of many dedicated individuals at the state and local level who understand it's not a house until it's a home. For more information, visit **http://housing.mt.gov/**.

BIG SKY ON THE BIG SCREEN

Author: Sten Iversen

Sten Iversen

Acclaimed film director Wim Wenders is a big fan of Butte, which he talks about as some kind of blessed amalgamation of an Edward Hopper painting, a setting for a Dashiell Hammett novel, and a natural theatrical backdrop for the sublime reality that makes up everyday life. Wenders told the magazine ALL-STORY that he first came to Butte in the 1970's, and it reminded him of the mining town in Germany where he grew up, full of the same core ingredients of industrial detritus and spirited people. Little wonder then that when he had an opportunity to shoot a film in which the screenplay calls for an aging western movie actor and his plight in the modern west, he had only one choice for a location. The main character is played by Sam Shepard, who also wrote the screenplay (and also loved the idea of shooting in Butte). Creative dreams and Butte's historical Uptown neighborhood came together in Wender's film ***Don't Come Knocking***, released early this year. He said of this latest trip to Butte, "The experience of shooting in this part of Montana was fabulous. Our local crew and casting were great, and the weather was steadily gorgeous. It could become addictive."

Montana has always been a draw for Hollywood, starting with the ***Cattle Queen of Montana*** in 1954 (starring Barbara Stanwyck and a certain future U.S. President), and reaching a zenith of national attention with the blockbuster ***A River Runs Through It***, the film version of the autobiographical novel by native son Norman Maclean. Should you doubt the power of film, fly fishing suppliers reported increased sales of 500% following the release of the movie!

Yet we all know the clichéd (but nonetheless true) phrase: 'It's a tough business.' The same could be said today of the competition to recruit the next big hit to your state. Other states, as well as nations, are waking up to the economic and publicity value of film and are offering very competitive incentives to lure Hollywood. While the movie business is not the largest spoke in Montana's economic wheel, a feature shoot in any community is a great value added influx to the local economy. Even greater still, since producers often seek to highlight the wonderful natural aspects of our state, a well-placed film is a perfect advertisement for the ever-growing tourism industry.

We here in the Film Office at the Montana Department of Commerce provide a bridge between the needs of the film industry and the opportunities that await the right project as they discover the perfect Montana community. Our natural wonders appear regularly in TV and films (most recently, the mountainous scenes from ***The Chronicles of Narnia, The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*** were shot in Glacier National Park and the Flathead Reservation), but we also strive to showcase the hidden gems that our many historically rich cities and towns have to offer. As of this writing, a children's film with a Billings connection is in its third week of filming in Bozeman and will wrap-up production in Livingston.

Don't Come Knocking during production

Our efforts to stay on the national forefront were enhanced with the passage of the Big Sky on the Big Screen Act. This important legislation was signed into law in 2005 by Governor Brian Schweitzer, who regularly speaks with high placed people in the movie business with no shortage of enthusiasm as to what Montana can bring to the big screen. "While I don't think you can ever quite capture a morning sunrise in Glacier, or one of those priceless sunsets along the Hi-line; for a lot of people a movie is their first exposure to the abundance of grandeur in Montana," Governor Schweitzer said. The state offers tax incentives tied to the expenditure of dollars in Montana and the employment of Montanans in the production of a feature film, television project, or commercial. So, as a moviegoer the next time you are impressed by a tower of snow peaked granite, or the expanse of a prairie painted in Charlie Russell's hues, take a look outside, it's probably closer to home than you think. For more information, visit **http://www.montanafilm.com**.

MORE THAN $1 MILLION DOLLARS RETURN TO THE WORKFORCE SYSTEM

Author: Pam Watson

On January 1, 2006, Montana officially transitioned to a single statewide planning area under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). This movement was a direct result of the swift actions by the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) last fall. The transition resulted in reallocation of more than $1 million dollars back into the workforce system - putting more dollars into the hands of Montana's citizens at a time when federal dollars are declining.

Previous WIA Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), required under federal law, were not signed by all mandatory system partners. As a result of the SWIB's partnering efforts to work with Native communities, a statewide MOU has been signed by all mandatory partners and is in place for activities throughout the State.

In addition, the SWIB Apprenticeship Committee developed an MOU defining the Apprenticeship Program Development Process that will be signed by business, education and labor partners. Governor Schweitzer and the SWIB are looking forward to the Board of Regents endorsing the process as well.

The SWIB met June 9, 2006 and certified its first four One Stops:

- Capitol Area Workforce System
- Missoula / Mineral Area Workforce System
- South Central JobLINC One-Stop Center
- Southwest Montana Workforce System

Labor & Industry Commissioner Keith Kelly and SWIB Chairman Dan Miles presented plaques to the certified one-stops recognizing their "effective community partnerships and continuous improvement in the workforce system."

The SWIB set a goal to have ten one-stops in place by the end of the year, and they continue to promote the expansion of the one-stop system in Montana.

Honoring the Achievements of Others

The State Workforce Investment Board seeks nominations for the Desiree Taggart Memorial awards in recognition of individuals, businesses and organizations that go above and beyond in their contribution to employment and training efforts, including improved productivity, creativity, economy and efficiency in Montana's workforce system.

Awards are given in memory of Taggart, the first Director of Workforce Development in the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity. Taggart is remembered for her inspiring dedication to Montana's workforce development efforts, for her abundant energy and willingness to go the extra mile, for her inquisitive mind and creative solutions, her passion for quality and excellence in workforce development, and fostering positive relationships among workforce development professionals, businesses and the workforce.

For nomination submissions including award information, nomination form and instructions please visit the SWIB website at **http://swib.mt.gov/** and click on the Resources Tab or call Chris Wilhelm at (406) 444 – 4480 for more information.

A ONE-STOP FOR ALL YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS

Author: Jack Hardy,
Butte Workforce Job Service Manager

If your business is struggling with a shortage of skilled workers, you may be interested in some services provided at your local Job Service office that could benefit you. In 1999, the Workforce Investment Act was created to provide recruitment, counseling, referral, supportive services, training, job placement and follow-up services to eligible individuals. The emphasis of these services is to assist qualified individuals in achieving economic self-sufficiency. Some of the people who qualify for services include low wage workers struggling to leave the welfare rolls, workers who have been laid off and certain youth.

The ultimate goal is to help those eligible to attain appropriate unsubsidized employment at a sustainable wage. For some people it may be as simple as learning some soft skills or how to sell their abilities in a written resume or an effective interview, and for others it may include short term vocational training. Individual needs are determined through an assessment that evaluates employment barriers, work history, education, occupational skills, interests, aptitudes, financial resources, and how these things relate to the local labor market.

The Butte Job Service Workforce Center, is a one-stop facility that works in partnership with Career Futures, Inc., Montana State AFL-CIO Project Challenge: Work Again, and the Human Resource Council District #12, to coordinate services. The one-stop facility provides services in Deer Lodge, Beaverhead, Jefferson (Whitehall), Granite, Powell and Madison counties. Business owners are encouraged to tap into this pool of future employees by providing on-the-job-training or partnering in other ways to create win-win opportunities. Visit at **http://wsd.dli.mt.gov/local/butte/.**

With the changing economy of Butte and the potential to attract new employers and businesses, our staff and partners staff are constantly looking at ways to improve the delivery of services. We are actively involved with higher education learning centers to help job seekers develop or polish their skills to meet the needs of prospective employers. Being a One Stop has definitely had a positive impact within our communities and has provided a seamless approach for several of our job seekers to receive direction and gain skills and information to pursue a career and/or self sufficient employment.

Job Service offices are located in 23 cities across Montana. To learn more about your local job service center log onto Montana's Workforce Services Division **http://wsd.dli.mt.gov/service/officelist.asp**.

UI-PHISHING AND DUMPING

Author: Margaret Ore

Phishing for an Identity

Protection of confidential information is a hot topic these days. Unemployment Insurance Division has taken a number of steps to ensure the security of the confidential information we use and store. Last year, we received two federal grants to deter identity theft and improve internal security. We purchased crosscut shredders for secure disposal of waste paper on-site in all three buildings. Other projects include securing our computer user roles more stringently, removing the social security number display on correspondence wherever possible, exploring direct deposit or debit cards for UI benefits, and building a secure e-mail exchange within the Internet claims application. Under information technology security, we are upgrading and expanding the documentation for our computer systems, as well as enhancing our disaster recovery plan. Even a small change such as using security-tint envelopes helps protect the confidentiality of our information.

Training to heighten security awareness was held in March. Well-trained staff is our best defense against a security breach, and we discussed social engineering, which is the manipulation of helpful people to get them to disclose confidential information. Our customer service representatives carefully verify the identity of each caller to ensure no 'phishing' for data occurs.

SUTA Dumping

An unethical practice of tax avoidance called "SUTA dumping" is the transference of employees from a business entity with a high unemployment tax rate and deficit experience to a newly created business entity that has a lower rate. SUTA dumping has the potential of adversely affecting other employers' rates. Montana enacted a law to detect and prevent SUTA dumping in the 2005 legislature, as did 48 other states in the past three years. The US Department of Labor made SUTA dumping detection software available to all states, and Montana Unemployment Insurance Division began tailoring the program to fit our computer system.

According to Sandy Bay, UI Contributions Bureau Chief, "Our Contributions Bureau staff has attended training, and sample extracts have been run to begin the analysis process." Both central office status staff and field auditors are developing the procedures to identify and investigate potential offenders and ensure they are paying their correct UI rate. The new law provides for penalties to those who knowingly engage in or encourage SUTA Dumping.

The department cautions employers to be wary of tax advice from others in regard to transferring employees as a way to lower a company's UI tax bill. "Employers should contact the UI Division immediately if they are given this advice," says Bay. "We will work with the employer and contact the tax advisor to prevent further problems."

The Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA) is the federal law that establishes the nationwide unemployment insurance program. Each state has its' own laws, often referred to as the State Unemployment Tax Act (SUTA), that set their payroll tax rates, based on both the type of business and past claim experience.

RAPID RESPONSE

A SAFETY NET FOR WORKERS FACING LAY-OFF

Author: Kathy Yankoff, Rapid Response Program Manager

In this era of corporate mergers, outsourcing and downsizing, it is not uncommon to read national headlines announcing mass layoffs and terminations. Although recently Montana has not experienced substantial employee reductions akin to the Motor City, Montana has had its share of corporate takeovers and business closures. Cities such as Butte, that have had to reinvent themselves, understand this all too well.

Running a business is not easy. Owners have to make many tough decisions based on what's best for the business. When it comes to a downsizing or closure, one of the most difficult pieces is knowing how to prepare and release the company's greatest resource – their workforce.

That's where a simple call can make all the difference. The Rapid Response Unit at your local Job Service Workforce Center is there to help the workers affected by a company downsizing or closure receive the information, services or training they need to remain in or re-enter the workforce as quickly as possible. We assist in providing businesses a safety net when they have to give workers the bad news. Proactive employers might elect to reduce employee hours and avoid a total business closure when employees can be retained on a part-time basis in temporary business slowdowns – with the help of unemployment insurance to offset the loss of fulltime income. This allows them to take care of their employees and their business -- for the best outcomes for both. Rapid Response staff is available to assist companies and workers facing a lay-off with information and services to help with the transition. "Lay-off Survival Workshops" can be arranged at times and locations that fit the needs of the workers and the business. These workshops provide information on a variety of topics including: reemployment and retraining services, unemployment insurance and the monetary assistance it provides, consumer credit counseling, sources for temporary financial assistance and other community resources. For workers who cannot attend a workshop, staff will gladly set individual appointments to explain the services and resources.

Locate your nearest Job Service Workforce Center at: **http://wsd.dli.mt.gov/service/officelist.asp**

Unemployment Insurance (UI) information is available at **http://uid.dli.mt.gov/**. A UI employer advocate is available at 444-3973.

TOP 10 PRIVATE EMPLOYERS

Community Counseling and Correctional Services

NorthWestern Energy

Renewable Energy Corporation

Butte Convalescent Care

town pump®
Montana Owned and Operated
Montana's BEST Since 1953

SILVER BOW AT A GLIMPSE

Author: Brad Eldredge

Total population: 32,982 (Census, 2005)

Median age: 38.9 (Census, 2000)

Median household income: $32,146 (Census, 2003)

Average unemployment rate: 4.3% (BLS LAUS estimate, 2005)

Top five industries in terms of employment:

1) Food Services and Drinking Places
2) Educational Services
3) Ambulatory Health Care Services
4) Hospitals
5) Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services

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.

Wal-Mart Store

Kids Behavioral Health

MERDI/MSE, Inc.

Montana Resources

St. James Healthcare

Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Health System

IN SILVER BOW COUNTY

**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 SILVER BOW

Butte Convalescent Center

"Butte Convalescent Center has a family atmosphere," said Human Resource Manager Sheilah Vincent. She should know. Vincent has invested 17 years with the company and backs her words with evidence when she emphatically declared, "My mother is here. I wouldn't have it any other way." Curt Quist, Director of Admissions, validates Vincent's declaration and notes that his mother received quality and caring service for the four months she required care. "The thoughtful and compassionate staff is what makes the Center a home," said Quist.

"We're part of the larger network of Sun Health," said Vincent. "The Corporation employs more than 16,000 healthcare workers nationally." The Butte Center employs 141 staff members (88 FT/53 PT) to operate their 24-hour skilled nursing care, 100 bed facility nestled in the Silver Bow valley. Services include physical, occupational and speech therapy, social work, dietary management and restorative programs.

However, cherished memories are currently influencing the Center's most recent therapy concept. What began with Dr. William Antonioli's framed memorabilia of 'Copper King' W. A. Clark's Columbia Gardens has blossomed into a revelation. The Center plans to unveil a wood shop, herbarium, ice cream parlor and arcade games for the residents this winter to enhance arm and hand coordination. Skills such as walking will be tested on uneven surfaces (grass, cobblestones, and boardwalks modeled after the Gardens) and are intended to improve coordination and mobility. "Modeling the Columbia Gardens experience by capturing these magical remembrances in therapy is healing for all involved," said Quist.

Community Counseling and Correctional Services (CCCS)

A volunteer Board of Directors, including then Butte CEO Don Peoples, combined efforts with former Prison Counselor Mike Thatcher in 1983, in the hopes of stimulating economic development for the betterment of society. The Board and small staff welcomed their first four Montana State prison inmates into CCCS on Christmas Eve that year. "We had 30 beds and 13 staff, minimal heat, no showers or kitchen in an old renovated abandoned building, but we were employing folks when unemployment was at a record high," said Thatcher.

Today, as Chief Executive Officer of the $20 million a year non-profit, Thatcher operates nearly 11 facilities in three states, with 440 staff members providing criminal justice and rehabilitation services to 738 adolescents, men and women. Butte alone employs 160 staff to assist individuals such as men's resident and recovering addict Bill who wholeheartedly relays his story, "I've realized the price of freedom is responsibility, hope, patience, and some damn good programs offered by the unselfish, caring and committed people of CCCS." And women's transition center resident Shirley who is also a recovering addict claims, "I spent several years in prison. CCCS has given me a second chance for a good, healthy, sober and clean life."

Accredited by the American Correctional Association for CCCS' evidenced-based curriculum, higher standards for program recipients and staff, and measurable positive outcomes, CCCS has created a brotherhood of humanity that protects the communities it serves and restores lives.

Kids Behavioral Health

"No matter who you are or how bad you think you are, you can always change your life around," exclaims youth resident Amanda. "The staff respects my dignity," seconds youth resident Trooney. "They are sweet, kind, gentle, caring, loving, assertive, loyal, patient, respectful and forgiving."

Believing that children, when provided opportunities for change, can and will change is the business of Kids Behavioral Health (KIDS); an 85-bed child and adolescent residential treatment facility that employs 110 FT and 35 PT staff in Butte. KIDS is committed to providing a safe, nurturing, healing and healthy therapeutic environment that allows for emotionally and behaviorally disturbed kids, ages five to 18, to, "figure out that the abuse that happened to me is not my fault," "I can do this...I've got lots of potential," and "Realize the mistakes I made, accept them, and make good changes in my life." (resident voices)

"I admire the staff for their commitment; to them it's not a job, it's a passion," declares Governing Board member and Director of the Butte Chamber Marko Lucich. KIDS identified the need for 'wrap-around' services and initiated Comprehensive School and Community Treatment (CSCT) in 1996, providing therapeutic services through 117 full time workers to 24 school districts (52 schools) throughout the state. "When other agencies are looking for ways out of this business, KIDS is embracing some of the toughest kids in the state," said Lucich.

MERDI/MSE, Inc.

MSE, Inc., headquartered in Butte, Montana, was established in 1974 to build a test facility to conduct magnetohydrodynamics (MHD) research. The company started as the for-profit entity of the Montana Economic Revitalization and Development Institute (MERDI), which owes its creation to the work of Senator Mike Mansfield. MERDI/MSE scientists and engineers are internationally recognized as the very best in their fields, developing and deploying some of the nation's most sophisticated cutting edge technology.

MSE Technology Applications, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of MERDI/MSE, Inc. has become a diversified engineering services and technology applications company with a project and customer base that includes various agencies of the federal government, state and local governments and private industry. MERDI/MSE has offices in six states and $22 million in annual revenue. Jim Kambich took over as President and Chief Executive for Don Peoples in the summer of 2006 after a steady and successful stewardship. Kambich says the secret to MERDI/MSE's success rests with the employees and their strong connection to Montana, including higher education institutions. "We rise up based on the wattage of the brainpower we hire...and of our 210 employees, I'd say 80% are coming out of Montana colleges and universities," Kambich said. "We've got great schools in Montana, and you bet we're proud to be able to provide opportunities for the next generation."

Montana Resources*

"Our people are our greatest assets," asserts Montana Resources (MR) home page of their website. MR is an open pit copper and molybdenum mine, where tons of raw ore are processed into marketable metals for an international market. MR is one of the diverse Washington Companies, held in controlling ownership of Dennis R. Washington, noted Montana businessman. Today in full operation, MR employs roughly 350 employees. MR was awarded the 2005 Business of the Year for Butte/Silver Bow by the Butte Chamber of Commerce in recognition of MR's contribution to a healthy Butte and state economy.

Authors: Andrew Geiger and Michelle Robinson

NorthWestern Energy

NorthWestern Energy, headquartered in Sioux Falls, S.D., is an investor-owned utility and one of the largest providers of electricity and natural gas in the northwest quadrant of the United States. It serves approximately 628,500 customers (375,000 electric and 253,500 natural gas) in Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska. Classified as a "mid-sized" utility by most industry standards, their service territory size is one of the largest in the country. NorthWestern cites as its mission "to create value for investors, customers and the communities served, by delivering competitively priced, reliable and dependable energy service." NorthWestern employs approximately 1,350 employees in three states, of which roughly 1,000 are located in Montana. More than 500 employees are based in Butte; the highest concentration of employees anywhere in the company.

NorthWestern Energy is a leading energy delivery company in the region that provides award winning customer service, continually invests in the transmission and distribution infrastructure and helps its customers understand how to use energy wisely.

"NorthWestern Energy serves hundreds of communities in three states; however, Butte is very important to us. Most of our operational functions for all three states are headquartered in Butte and the community is home to almost 40% of our employees - more than any other community in our company," said Mike Hanson, president and CEO of NorthWestern Energy. "We're proud to be a part of all the communities that we serve because our success is tied to their success. Butte is a thriving community and one that more than 500 of our employees, including a few top executives, are proud to call home."

Renewable Energy Corporation (REC)

REC Silicon of Butte, the world's largest dedicated producer of solar grade polysilicon, is internationally recognized for manufacturing the purest silicon on earth. Production requires a conscientious effort to implement lean manufacturing techniques, government subsidies to offset costs, and a highly skilled labor force for the manufacture and sale of silane gas and polycrystalline silicon for the photovoltaic and electronics industry. "We are at the beginning of the value chain for solar energy production," said Vice President Dave Seburn. "In order to remain competitive in today's market we apply lean manufacturing technology for greater energy and human efficiencies."

Recent domestic and international solar demands have put upward pressure on production in REC's 240-acre Butte plant; they remain low-waste, low-impact, low-cost, environmentally friendly, and uphold their mission of becoming the most cost-efficient solar energy company in the world, with a presence throughout the value chain.

"Butte has fantastic human resources," claims Seburn. "We work directly with Montana colleges to actively recruit graduates that have obtained experience in the field and long to return to Montana. It's not hard to convince them to come home to Butte."

St. James Healthcare

St. James Healthcare has played an important role in the history of the Butte region. The vision of the hospital was born of a journey begun 125 years ago by the first Sisters of Charity to set foot upon Montana soil. Today, this vision and Mission to enhance the human condition, guided by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Health System, not only endures, it flourishes all around us.

A Catholic hospital, St. James Healthcare is now one of Montana's largest comprehensive hospitals, serving the health care needs of people in a seven-county region. St. James Healthcare proudly serves residents of Montana along with two other Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth hospitals and leaders in Montana: St. Vincent Healthcare in Billings and Holy Rosary Healthcare in Miles City. St. James offers the people of Montana specialized services in Cardiology, Oncology, Orthopedics, Neurosciences, and Women's & Children's services. It is a 100-bed facility staffed by 600 employees, all dedicated to the integration of tradition and technology.

James R. Kiser, President and Chief Executive Officer for St. James Healthcare says, "St. James is committed to clinical excellence, quality, safety, satisfaction and spiritual, compassionate care. With our state-of-the-art technology, dedicated employees and physicians, our community minded spirit is a perfect fit for Butte. We love Butte and are dedicated to providing care to those with modest means. By staying true to our mission, we believe that the next 125 years can only get better."

Town Pump

Town Pump's growth has followed the prominence of the automobile, the impact of interstate commerce, and most recently the increased importance of tourism to Montana's economy. Founded in 1953 by Tom Kenneally Sr and Mary Ann Kenneally, Town Pump was the first to bring self-service to Montana, and the first to install bill acceptors in gasoline pumps. The goal was to sell a higher volume at a lower price to make up for lower margins. Today about 97% of gasoline sales in Montana are made via self-service.

As unbranded independents, Town Pump Inc. had to show great innovations to make it through the period of world-wide shortages in the 1970s; and they emerged in the 1980s by responding to what customers wanted in terms of greater conveniences: more groceries, deli, services and fully automated pumps. In the modern era, Town Pump unveiled what it called the "Whole Package" concept, to include car washes, laundromats, motels, quick serves, delis and gaming establishments. "The world is changing and so is our Town Pump business. It is an absolute requirement from a cost standpoint that we discipline ourselves everyday so we can compete and deliver our best to our customers. This requires from each of us a relentless pursuit to be productive and efficient in everything we do. For well-run companies like our Town Pump, there is never an end to that pursuit," Tom Kenneally Sr said.

The company is also receiving accolades for its commitment to the Butte community by completing a major expansion of their headquarters in Uptown Butte, making Town Pump an important anchor that is adding stability to the Main Street renovation project.

Wal-Mart

The first Wal-Mart was started in Rogers, Arkansas by the famed founder Sam Walton. Times have changed since these "dime store days;" today Wal-Mart is the largest employer in the United States. In total, the corporation employs 1.8 million associates worldwide, and 1.3 million in the United States.

While employee numbers vary, the Butte location continues to hover over 400 employees. Store management touts the fact that its Associates and customers come from all over the southwestern corner of the state. They say the Butte community is a big supporter, but that people in rural areas view their store as a must stop when they are in town. The charitable projects at the Butte Wal-Mart frequently start with ideas from their employees, and so they are seeing this impact in the many communities they service. Wal-Mart donated more than $245 million to charitable organizations last year, the majority of which was given at the local level.

**Specifics on Silver Bow's private employers were unavailable, corporate websites were referenced for information contained therein.*

WE ARE MONTANANS
REFLECTIONS

I'm proud to call Butte my home for the past 27 years of my life. Ironically, it has many similarities to my birthplace of Red Lodge, where I was born in my parents' house, the 3rd of 6 sons born to an Irish Catholic father from a coal mining family and a Jewish mother from the Hollywood movie business. Being born in 1945 in the shadow of the Holocaust, I was taught many important things, none more important than respecting, rather than fearing, diversity.

I remember vividly three pictures that hung on the wall of our family's home. These three visuals represented the morals of my family and helped form my views of the world. The first, Jesus Christ, symbolized the importance of Christian values in our lives. From those teachings came my commitment to the last and least among us. The second, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, represented my family's belief that government can and should make a difference in people's lives. President Roosevelt's belief that the first responsibility of government is to ensure that people get a fair shake and have economic opportunity gave birth to my commitment to continually seek productive work that benefits communities as a whole. The third, John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers Union, was a constant reminder that workers have the right to have a voice and to organize and fight for the average guy, to have good jobs, fair wages and safe working conditions.

I arrived in Butte in 1979, noting its similarities to my birthplace with its strong labor history as a mining community and ethnically diverse people. Times were tough for the Mining City - times that would forever change the economy of Butte and Montana. In September 1980, the Anaconda Company/ARCO shut down the Berkley Pit, the Anaconda smelter, and the Great Falls refinery. Between 1975 and 1984, 5,000 direct "company" jobs were lost in Butte and Anaconda. From 1979 to 1984, in Butte alone, thirty percent of all jobs in the community disappeared. Butte's obituary was being written by many, but the community of Butte said, "No, we will not die!"

I feel privileged to have been part of a group of community leaders working to get the copper mines reopened. That project whetted my appetite for economic development in creating jobs for people who needed work most, helping to sustain families and the fabric of the community. Following that, I spent 18 years as Executive Director of the Butte Local Development Corporation (BLDC) gaining experience that prepared me to help Governor Schweitzer build and shape the Montana economy.

Each day as I drive home to Butte from Helena, I think of Butte's survival instinct and "can do" spirit, and it inspires me to share this with all of Montana. Butte is tight knit community, where people look out for one another and enjoy each others' company. Equality is woven into the fabric of our lives here; the worker is valued as much as the manager. When you have a town full of people who know their value, you get a community of people who will never give up until they achieve their true potential. Butte never gives up on itself. Doing economic development in that context is about a community effort not just to survive, but to thrive. That, by the way, is what Butte is about and what I, as a "Butte guy," hope to bring to my efforts to help Governor Schweitzer in his commitment to build, strengthen and diversify Montana's economy.

Evan, Gail and Brendan, Christmas 1986 - Butte

THE STAKES ARE HIGH

AND THE PAYOFF IS EVEN BETTER

Authors: Brad Eldredge & Tyler Turner

"Butte has a most cosmopolitan population derived from the four corners of the world," read the Montana State Highway Commission sign. **"She was a bold, unashamed, rootin', tootin', hell-roarin' camp in days gone by and still drinks her liquor straight."**

Known as "the richest hill on earth," for its history of copper mining, Butte is moving beyond its industrial legacy by attracting diverse businesses engaged in both high-tech manufacturing and restoration of the surrounding environment.

Butte currently enjoys positive labor market conditions with an unemployment rate that averaged 4.3 percent in 2005, (representing full-employment) and strong wage and employment growth with 339 jobs added in 2005 (an increase of 2.3%), while average wages out-paced inflation, growing 6.6% over the year. Butte's 2005 average wage per job of $30,370 exceeds the state average by over $1,200. These high wage levels are a result of a revival of copper mining as well as the county's ability to diversify its economy into other high wage sectors.

One of the best examples of Butte's efforts to attract diverse businesses to the area is Renewable Energy Corporation (highlighted in the Top 10 Private Employers). A Norwegian based company, REC employs nearly 300 people in the production of silane gas and polycrystalline silicon for the photovoltaic and electronics industry. The company's notable employment opportunities, above average wages and commitment to remain environmentally friendly make it an important contributor to the economy.

The Governor's recent summit on restoration economics brought attention to the potential economic benefits of cleaning up the environment. Butte has been a leader in restoration activities, combining government and private sector efforts to address the environmental legacy of its industrial past. Although the amount of employment and wages due to restoration activities is hard to quantify, several large companies, including MSE Technology Applications and Pioneer Technical Services Inc., are engaged in reclamation and environmental services activities.

Butte's traditional copper mining industry is also doing well. Copper extracted by Montana Resource (another Top 10 employer) is currently commanding historically high prices. In fact, as of August 2, 2006, copper prices had increased 78% over-the-year. Much of the increase in copper prices is driven by rising demand in developing nations, particularly China, which shows how global economic trends can affect the local economy. Montana Resource's website states that they employ over 300 skilled workers in high wage jobs. Though Butte's economy is no longer solely dependent on copper production, this industry still has a significant impact on the local economy.

Mining isn't the only historic industry that is still playing a role in Butte's economy. Casinos and bars are a constant in the community, drawing both locals and thrill seekers from surrounding areas to their neon-tinted lights. Gambling has always been a constant in Butte since the mines opened and has shown no signs of stopping. More money is wagered per person in Butte than almost anywhere else in the state. The bar scene, though tame in comparison to a century ago, still remains visible, especially on St. Patrick's Day. Residents and tourist can still find the doors to the M&M open early, just the same as in 1890.

It is clear that Butte's economy has undergone a transition from a reliance on mining to a more diverse industry mix. Although the county's population peaked in the 1920s, recent estimates show the population has begun to stabilize and move away from the city center. Businesses are also increasingly locating in the southern portion of the city at the expense of the traditional Uptown business district. These changes show that Butte's economy is becoming more diverse and dynamic. This bodes well for its future economic stability, while allowing it to continue maintaining ties to its heritage.

Arcade & M&M Photos provided by Library of Congress

PLUGGING INTO A HOT INDUSTRY

Author: George Edwards

In Montana today, one in every four new jobs created is in the Construction industry (*Research and Analysis Bureau, 2006*). The State Electrical Board licenses approximately 4000 licensees. With an average hourly wage of $21.71 an hour, it's easy to see why the electrical business is buzzing.

Electrical contractors are required to be licensed by the Montana Department of Labor and Industry in order to obtain an electrical permit. Two levels of electrical contractors' licenses are available. (1) A limited electrical contractor is limited for residential construction consisting of less than five living units in a single structure. (2) An unlimited electrical contractor is, as the name implies, not limited to the type of construction. Anyone may become an electrical contractor. However, this license does not allow every licensee to perform the electrical installation. An electrical contractor must employ licensed electricians to perform electrical installations.

Becoming an electrical contractor requires several preparatory steps.

First, **Register the Business Name & Business Type** (corporation, limited liability corporation, partnership or sole proprietor) by contacting the Secretary of State's office, (406) 444-3665 or by visiting **www.sos.mt.gov**.

o Workers' Compensation, Unemployment Insurance, and other insurances apply directly to the type of business you are declaring.

Second, **Obtain Workers' Compensation Insurance** from a private insurance carrier or from the Montana State Fund. Information on workers' compensation is available from the Employment Relations Division at (406) 444-7734 or online at **http://erd.dli.mt.gov**.

o Special consideration: A business with no employees may qualify for an Independent Contractor's Exemption. Contact the Employment Relations Division at (406) 444-1446 or at **http://erd.dli.mt.gov** to see if you qualify.

Third, **Establish Unemployment Insurance** by contacting the Unemployment Insurance Division, (406) 444-3834 or **www.uid.dli**.mt.gov for more details.

Fourth, **Determine the Type of Electrical Contractors' License Required for Your Business Needs**. An electrical contractor must have a responsible master electrician for an unlimited electrical contractor or a responsible journeyman electrician for a limited electrical contractor. This means that an electrical contractor must be a licensed electrician or employ a Montana licensed electrician who is responsible for the electrical installations.

Lastly, **Complete an Application and Pay Appropriate Fees**. Applications are available on the State Electrical Board website at **www.electrician.mt.gov** or by contacting the board office at (406) 841-2367.

Apprenticeship and Training

Electrical contractors may employ apprentice electricians who work under the supervision of licensed electricians on a job site. Electrical contractors will need to register an apprentice with the Montana Department of Labor and Industry Apprenticeship & Training program, (406) 444-3998, before an individual will be allowed to work on an electrical installation.

Permitting

Licensed electrical contractors will be able to obtain electrical permits for an electrical installation,issued by the state or a certified city depending upon the location. Information about electrical permits may be obtained by contacting the Building Standards and Measurement Division at **www.BuildingCodes.mt.gov** or by calling (406) 841-2047. Permitting will soon be available online.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Author: Marilyn Njos

The Department of Labor and Industry's Business Standards Division recently took a giant leap forward in customer service. Montana's plumbers, electricians, real estate agents and property managers are now able to access their professional license credit information online. The Professional Continuing Education service, **www.ContinuingEd.mt.gov**, allows licensees the ability to monitor state-required continuing education (CE) information quickly and conveniently.

"Prior to activating Professional Continuing Education, it was the responsibility of a licensee to ensure CE requirements had been met," said Labor Commissioner Keith Kelly. "If audited, a licensee had to provide documentation that they had obtained the required number of credits. The new eGovernment service eliminates this cumbersome step for all parties involved."

At the conclusion of a course, educators will have 20 days to electronically submit a roster of attendees. Once submitted, a licensee's CE information is updated instantaneously and can be viewed without delay. Based upon initial survey feedback, users find the service easy to navigate and state that they would use the system again.

A separate state system, called Online License Renewal, will then track the number of credits one obtains throughout the year. When it comes time for a licensee to renew, the Online License Renewal, **www.LicenseRenewal.mt.gov** system will recognize that the individual has met their CE requirements and allows the licensee to proceed and renew their license.

"The convenience of accessing, viewing and managing continuing education information online saves time and money for all parties involved," said Kelly.

The Board of Realty Regulation Rookie Education Course will occur on:

* Sept. 7-8 at the Marina Cay Resort, Bigfork
* October 19-20 at Ruby's Inn, Missoula
* November 16-17 at the Hampton Inn, Billings
* December 6-7 at the Best Western Great Northern, Helena

Registration fee is $100. It is open only to new real estate salespeople, licensed this calendar year. Contact Marilyn Njos @ (406) 841-2321

Lt. GOVERNOR LEADS STUDY

Authors: Will Hammerquist and Anne Wolfinger

When a Montana worker is injured on the job and unable to return to work the impact is felt not only by the injured worker and the injured workers family, but by their employer, their employer's industry, and even the general public.

Workers' compensation insurance is a social program that seeks to protect both workers and their employers from catastrophic loss by balancing the benefit needs of injured workers with the affordability needs of employers. Maintaining this balance can be a difficult task during times of rapidly increasing medical and treatment costs.

Inspired by an Oregon report that showed Montana's premium rates were eighth highest in the country, Governor Brian Schweitzer asked Lieutenant Governor John Bohlinger in February of 2006 to lead an examination into the true costs and benefits of Montana's workers' compensation system.

"Nothing is more important than having affordable workplace insurance that protects workers and employers," said Governor Brian Schweitzer. "That is why I asked John Bohlinger, who is himself a small business owner, to head up this effort."

To take the study from idea to reality, Bohlinger turned to Labor Commissioner Keith Kelly and Employment Relations Division Administrator Jerry Keck. Keck organized a project team that was able to define the project's purpose and scope using project management methodology.

"The commitment and professionalism of Jerry's team has been outstanding. They were able to define the study and get it off the ground in a rapid time frame," said Bohlinger. "From what we have learned so far, I have no doubt that the final product will provide both a fact based assessment and some needed answers."

According to the project charter, the project purpose is to define and conduct a study of the Montana workers' compensation system—premiums, benefits, costs and other factors—as compared to selected other states. The study will determine and establish accurate means of comparison across other state systems and report the results in an objective manner.

Workers' compensation systems are a complex balance of benefits, premiums, and costs which vary tremendously from state to state. Anecdotal information often falls short of accurate systems' comparison. The Montana workers' compensation study project is striving to identify specific, well-defined metrics to provide policy makers with baseline information on the current status of the system. This baseline data will also allow for accurate comparisons with workers' compensation systems throughout the region.

The end result of the project will be a report on the study results, with a ranking of state workers' compensation systems in the region according to the established criteria and metrics, along with a description of the primary cost drivers in Montana. The report will not make recommendations for system change at this time. System change recommendations will be addressed in an anticipated second phase of the system study, which calls for a collaborative development effort with key stakeholders throughout both government and the private sector. To learn more please visit **http://erd.dli.mt.gov/wcstudyproject/wcstudyproject.asp**.

Mark your calendars now for the Workers' Compensation Educational Conference, Understanding National and State Issues in Workers' Compensation, January 10-11, 2007, Helena. For more information, please visit **http://erd.dli.mt.gov/wcstudyproject/educonf/educonfhome.asp**.

FROM BUTTE TO THE BENCH

Author: Judge James Shea

I was born and raised high on the hill in Butte, America. Although the first few years of my life were spent in a house in the shadow of the Mountain Con Mine, we soon moved to a more affluent neighborhood a few blocks away in the shadow of the Missoula Mine.

As the youngest child in a large Butte Irish family, I quickly came to learn that our collective identity was dominated by three things – our Catholic faith, Irish heritage, and Democratic party politics. It would be hard to say which of these took precedence in our family conscience, as it was instilled in me from a young age that they were not mutually exclusive of one another but, rather, inextricably intertwined. During the 1960's, my dad served as Chairman of the Silver Bow County Democratic Party.

My mother instilled in my brothers, sisters and me a profound sense of commitment to social justice. Before I was born, my mom went to work for the Butte Anti-Poverty Council, retiring several years ago as its Executive Director. She demonstrated time and again that her commitment to advocating for the poor and disenfranchised was much more of a calling than a job. At my own wedding reception, the first people to eat were a homeless family, stranded in Missoula, that my mom had met en route between the church and the reception hall. Those who knew my mother well did not even blink as she ushered them in to the hall.

Even though (or probably because) neither of my parents attended college, they placed a premium on education. After graduating from Butte Central High School I attended the University of Montana for both my undergraduate and law degrees. I was privileged to clerk for Judge Paul Hatfield for a year before moving to Portland, Oregon to work as a public defender, then my civil practice led me home to Montana. After eleven years in private practice, I embarked on a new chapter when Governor Schweitzer honored me with the appointment to the Workers' Compensation Court.

A little more than sixty years ago, my grandfather died from silicosis, contracted from years of working underground in the Butte mines to give his family a better life than he had in Ireland. As I strive daily to administer justice as Workers' Compensation Judge, I am humbled by the broad shoulders of those Butte Irish men and women to whom I owe so much.

48 HOURS IN BUTTE

Author: Andrew Geiger

"We should all go to Butte this weekend," a friend says, "I love Butte, it always reminds me of home." Home, in her case, is a hardscrabble mining town in Fife, Scotland. Next there's a wee bit of reminiscing about how the laboring towns of the Old World resemble the mining towns of Appalachia and the steel cities of the Northeast and Midwest, with the lineage continuing on to the great Western outpost of the Industrial Revolution: Butte, America. Little Pittsburgh, the regionally biased easterners labeled her.

Butte in the early 20th Century, where safety instructions in the mines had to be written in 16 languages; larger than Denver; a site of Presidential visits; where twenty-four hours a day buckets of sweat were shed in other-worldly depths even as one lone bar, The Atlantic, poured 10,000 mugs of beer on the same schedule. For a fun and readily accessible window on this world, read *Mile High Mile Deep* by Richard K. O'Malley. To reconnect with the lineage of this historical and demographic phenomenon in Montana, consider a weekend getaway to Uptown Butte. It is different today, for better or for worse, but it is still all *there*. You can still find the ethnic diversity complete with nativist pride, the towering architecture and handcrafted gargoyles of gilded times, and the same entrepreneurial shopkeepers in direct lineage to boom times. Mix in some of the best fare of traditional and new American cuisine, and an economy that has learned to transition from a one-industry town, and you have all the trappings for a fun urban adventure.

Mining Musuem. Photo courtesy of Donnie Sexton, Travel Montana

Betsy Baumgart, the director of Travel Montana in the Montana Department of Commerce, says that Butte's big holidays are well discovered, even internationally, but that off-weekends in Butte are still the best value going. Jon Sesso, Butte-Silver Bow Planning Director, area legislator, and recent victim of a spoof on The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, is actually quite enthusiastic when talking about all that his city has to offer its visitors. "We're a mining town, and we'll hopefully always be a mining town, but the remediation work we've done for the last two decades allows the great things about Butte to shine through," Sesso said. "We've got 25,000 historians and tour guides in this city, so just stop someone and ask what it is they think you should definitely see while you're in town." As a starting point, we offer the following items:

The Finlen

Where to Stay

In addition to modern hotel accommodations throughout the city, the Uptown area features the Finlen Hotel, by any measure one of the best values for lodging. It has a lobby and individual rooms similar to what one would find in most European hotels, and its landmark location puts you in the center of it all. You might also want to consider the growing number of bed-and-breakfasts, with the flagship being the Copper King. The western mansion of William Andrews Clark, the grand structure on Granite Street, is surprisingly cozy given the size—a ballroom represents much of the fourth floor! Should you worry about feeling like too much of a high roller, the helpful, yet laid back (and historically knowledgeable) staff take the starch out of the air for a comfortable and unique experience.

What to Do

Outdoor enthusiasts point out that Butte is 10 minutes from everywhere. Great water recreation can be found by visiting the Big Hole, the Beaverhead, and Rock Creek. For a special hike, take the trail up to visit Our Lady of the Rockies, a permanent resident atop the Continental Divide where She takes in the city's happenings. Butte history is well preserved in Uptown at any one of several museums. From mining to moonshine, ask at your hotel for brochures on where to go. If you're not sure where to begin, hop on the Old No. 1 Trolley Tour car for a two hour breezy ride that will fill you in on the many characters who've inhabited the city.

Where to Shop

Uptown offers a full spectrum of antiquing opportunities, from heirloom items to fun kitsch. While there are too many shops to list, pop into any one and they will provide you with a map to locate every antique store in the neighborhood and the treasures within. Books and Books has a full supply of Montana history for those stirred to explore further following your trip; and you don't need to be Irish to be impressed by the inventory in Cavanaugh's County Celtic, the interior of which is as green as County Cork after a spring rain. For great old world flavors, stop in to Duane's Sausages and Specialties, featuring 15 varieties of sausages and specialty cuts of the finest meat (try the buffalo kabobs). Lastly, don't leave town without a visit to the gourmet food shop, The Front Street Market. Don't expect snobbery, but rather a full array of what you'll need to fix a special meal paired with the perfect wine.

Where to Dine and Drink

The Acoma restaurant offers aromatic items not found elsewhere, from escargot to osso buco, all served up with a great view of the city. Modern Butte landmark, The Uptown Cafe continues its tradition of New American cuisine made from fresh local ingredients (even as the old world dish of beef Wellington remains a customer favorite). A new kid on the block, Fred's Mesquite Grill, has a fun and flexible menu ranging from kabobs to hearty salads to familiar pub fare. Microbrews, wines and specialty cocktails available. Of course any trip to Butte requires a visit to Pork Chop Johns for authentic "*Butteacana.*" Finally, locals consistently rate Lydia's as the best place to go for classic Italian dishes. Despite its current location on Harrison Avenue, it is an honorary Uptown establishment owing to the fact that it was a pit expansion that caused it to move from its original Meaderville location.

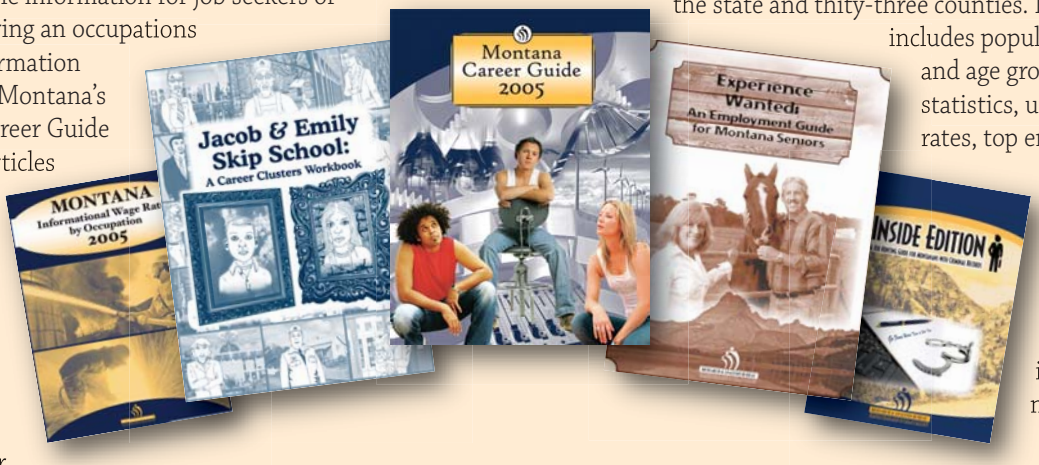
For a nightcap, visit the famous M&M bar. Rumored to be Jack Kerouac's favorite hangout, the classic interior sat dark until a recent grand re-opening in which Governor Brian Schweitzer personally delivered the state liquor license (and then promptly made the first toast). There's no cover charge for the blarney-laced stories you'll hear inside, and they serve breakfast if you end up staying too long. *Butte!*

Too much to fit in during 48 hours? You'll just have to schedule another visit.

CAREER & LABOR MARKET RESOURCES:
THE PUBLICATIONS OF MONTANA'S RESEARCH & ANALYSIS BUREAU

There's a part of us all that dreams about winning the lottery or finding treasure buried in our backyard. In the meantime, we have to work. For anyone who needs Labor Market Information, finding out about R&A's publications can be a bit like discovering buried treasure. Whether you're an employer trying to decide what wage rate to offer for a new position, a teacher or guidance counselor looking for career resources for students, or a disabled person looking for job-hunting tips, Montana's Research and Analysis Bureau (R&A) has a publication to suit your needs. Here is a sampling of what R&A has to offer:

Montana Career Guide: Though we distribute it to all high school sophomores in the state, the Montana Career Guide contains valuable information for job seekers of any age. Featuring an occupations guide with information on over 200 of Montana's top jobs, the Career Guide also provides articles on choosing a training program, gaining work experience, marketing your skills in a resume, interviewing for jobs, and more.



Jacob & Emily Skip School - A Career Clusters Workbook: Designed for elementary students, this workbook introduces kids to the world of work using a compelling storyline and fun activities. It comes with a downloadable Teacher's Guide full of in-class exercises to reinforce the ideas presented in the reading.

Montana Informational Wage Rates by Occupation: How much does an electrician earn in Missoula? Or a surgical technician in Eastern Montana? This is the publication that can answer these questions. It contains wage rates for more than 600 occupations and 8 regions of the state.

Experience Wanted - An Employment Guide for Montana Seniors: A guide designed for older Montanans who want to reenter the workforce, switch careers, or consider alternatives to retirement. It covers topics such as job-hunting, staying current in today's workforce, balancing your time, how work affects one's social security benefits, and more.

Inside Edition - A Job Hunting Guide for Montanans with Criminal Records: Resources for ex-felons re-entering the workforce. This guide explains the rights of both employers and prospective employees regarding criminal records. It also includes tips on the job search, writing resumes and cover letters, and interviewing.

A Job Hunting Guide for Montanans with Disabilities: This guide was designed to help disabled Montanans find work. Includes sections on the job search process, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), agencies and governmental employment assistance programs, and more.

State & County Fliers: Labor Market Information fliers for the state and thity-three counties. Information includes population by area and age group, labor force statistics, unemployment rates, top employers, agricultural statistics, employment by industry, real wages, per capita personal income, and more.

Prevailing Wage Publications: The official wage rates to be used for bidding in public works and other prevailing wage projects. Includes separate wage publications for Building, Heavy, and Highway Construction, and Non-Construction Services.

Who Needs Math & Science?: A collection of interviews with professionals in a diverse array of occupations. This publication illustrates the connection between school and the world of work, using real world examples that emphasize the importance of math and science.

Finding R&A publications is simple. Start by logging on to our website at **ourfactsyourfuture.org**. On the home page, click the publications button, then select the publication you need.

Once you've checked out what we have to offer, we'd love to know what you think. We strive to be responsive to your needs, so let us know what you want to see from us. Please direct your questions and comments to: **webmasterrad@mt.gov**.

A SPIRIT OF COOPERATION

Authors: Commerce Director Tony Preite and Labor Commissioner Keith Kelly

Looking back at a career in economic and community development, I decided to take the opportunity of this magazine to review lessons learned and see where we are headed as a state in this global economy. Having worked at the local and federal level, I was excited and proud to join the Administration of Governor Brian Schweitzer because I share his vision of planning for the economic future and taking concrete measures to ensure we arrive together in a Montana true to our heritage.

The term 'economic development' has a differing connation from one person to another. While some see rapid growth that quickly changes an urban landscape, others see an effort to diversify an agriculture-based community so that future generations have opportunities and families stay together. From our perspective, taking a broad view of how best to define economic development is positive because local communities should have the flexibility to decide what is best for them. Like every other component of government—when it is functioning properly—the will of the people defines where the focus of our joint efforts should go. I still *firmly* believe what Mr. Kuka told us in that classroom up in Havre: that the people are the government.

While strategies differ, all economic development initiatives should operate under a principle I'll label 'strategic utilitarianism.' The concept here is that sound public policy is rooted in deriving the greatest amount of good for the largest segment of the citizenry as possible. As but one example, at the state level we put this into action this past year by using the same funding source to allow the City of Whitefish to address affordable housing, while Dodson and Malta up on the Hi-Line directed the funds at basic infrastructure needs. In both cases the strategic component came from the local level. High housing prices? Let's help young people become first-time homebuyers and provide affordable housing for hardworking individuals. Trouble with a local tax base? Let's make sure all of our local communities have a level playing field for growing the economy. Simply put: Let's ensure our investment stretches to reach the greater good.

We're seeing the results today with partnerships that brought in AvMax to Great Falls, GlaxoSmithKline to Hamilton, and many more all across Montana. So count me in the camp of the vigilant optimists, or as Governor Schweitzer always puts it when I call with some good economic news. "Great to hear Tony, but I want you back at work early tomorrow morning!"

Fresh out of college, I found my bride Norma Jean and my first job in Butte. Her dad, Joseph H. Walsh, of St. Ann's parish, was a shanty Irishman who had advanced to management ranks of the mines with little more than a high school education. What he lacked in traditional schooling he more than made up for in his proactive and cooperative work ethic. Joe, as he is known to friends, reminded me that it's a "spirit of cooperation rather than confrontation that gets the job done." His words resonated in my head as I shared my draft notice for Vietnam with Norma Jean, knowing that I would not be with her when she bore our first son.

I saw my share of confrontation on the front lines, witnessed the tragic toll on mankind and thankfully returned to the safe community of Montana and my family. That is why today, it is more important than ever for folks to create partnerships and build communities of support. It's no secret that Montanans have struggled for years to earn decent wages, dignity and safe working conditions. Ranking 50th in the nation for wages is certainly not something I'm proud of. That is why I'm delighted to serve in an administration that is committed to partnerships that include business, education, labor and government to enhance workforce development strategies and implementation. I recognize that one entity cannot do it alone.

The recent mean spirited anti-union advertisements have many folks perplexed, including me. To what purpose does this serve to pit one party against the other? When did we lose sight that employment agreements by representatives are negotiated for the betterment of an employee and employer relationship? Isn't it common knowledge that when it comes to state employee raises that all terms are presented before the legislative body for a final decision?

The New York Times reports that the economy continues to add jobs, but wages continue to stagnate, trade unions are much weaker than they once were, buying power of the minimum wage is at a 50-year low, and health care is more expensive than a decade ago. Their conclusion - nationally we're growing companies instead of workers' paychecks. Nearly 128 years ago, miners were fighting to keep their $3.50 a day wage rather than risking a pay cut to $3. In today's Montana we continue to make positive gains by ensuring every Montanan has a voice.

BIZ FROM BABS (Business Advocate Barbara Kennedy)

Q: We are having so much trouble finding service workers who will stay with us. We hire people and they work a day or two and don't return. What can we do?

A: The wants and needs of employees have changed. Employers who don't quickly adapt their thinking and figure out a way to adapt their business to the wants and needs of the workforce will be left behind.

The competitive advantage in the new economy is in how we "engage" our workers. From the lowest employee in the hierarchy right up to the CEO, employees need to feel they are part of something of value and that they belong. People will join companies for pay and benefits, but they stay or leave because of the people. The most important person in an organization has now become the direct supervisor. Employees want a supervisor who values them, one who knows and understands them and treats them fairly—someone they can trust and respect. Employees who earn a decent wage are more apt to remain on the job if they are treated with respect, provided with positive feedback, constructive criticism and challenging work.

Service workers are the face of the organization, but are often some of the most disrespected employees in the workforce. These employees present your first impression, the direct conduit from you to the customer, and they need to feel engaged, invested, and challenged in their work. Provide them with a reason to come back to work again and again by offering opportunities to develop creative ways of doing mundane tasks and develop new skills. A Gallup survey showed that employees who have an above average attitude toward their work will generate 38% higher customer satisfaction scores, 22% higher productivity, and 27% higher profits for their companies.

Q: How can we get our employees to look at workplace safety as a serious part of their jobs? It seems like we're continually dealing with injuries and worker compensation claims, and our insurance costs just keep escalating.

A: A business with a good reputation for safety will be a business that attracts good workers. But maintaining interest and awareness in workplace safety is difficult. First, there needs to be a commitment from management that the health and safety of employees is a core value of the company and it needs to be reflected in the corporate culture. Management at all levels needs to maintain a visible role in the implementation of a safety plan and follow all safety provisions. If employees don't see the commitment from management, they're not going to take safety issues seriously.

Second, partner with your employees in your commitment by sharing the effects of promoting safety in your workplace—keeping injuries to a minimum and keeping the cost of worker's compensation down. When an employee can't work because of an injury, nobody benefits. If there's a savings in worker's compensation costs, the savings can go into workplace activities that benefit everyone.

The use of meaningful recognition for working safely may induce good performance, increase employee morale and serve as a continuing reminder of the safety message. Gift cards, special parking places, and plaques are just a few of the items that can be used. Safety presentations, demonstrations, panel discussions, and videos at meetings can also be effective methods for maintaining awareness. There is no one best way to keep safety awareness high, but it's essential that any programs be creative, diverse and sincere. It's important that employees actively participate in the planning of any safety incentive programs and that they also take responsibility for maintaining a safe workplace. It takes the hard work and dedication of everyone in the organization to maintain an effective safety and health plan.

Q: We offer our employees all the standard benefits, vacation, sick leave, health insurance, life insurance, etc., but are looking for other low cost perks that we can provide also. Do you have any suggestions?

A: A survey of your employees is a good way to find out what they prefer and doesn't take a lot of time. Some of the perks that are offered in other businesses include:

- Casual dress days
- Cell phones
- Massage services at the workplace
- Company outings
- Pot luck breakfasts or lunches
- Free popcorn
- Flexible time to go to a gym
- Compressed work weeks
- Public transportation subsidy
- Pick up and delivery of dry cleaning
- Education assistance
- Assistance with work/life stresses

Most of the added benefits that employees seem to prefer provide them opportunities to make their daily lives a little easier or to have opportunities to spend fun time with co-workers. It's a cheap price to pay to retain your employees and have some peace of mind running your business.

What's Your Destination?

All Aboard for the Assistance for Business Clinics

City	Date	Location	Sponsor	Phone	Fee
Butte	Sept 13	Red Lion Hotel	Chamber	723-3177	$35
Lewistown	Sept 19	Yogo Inn	JSEC/Chamber	535-1564	$25/20
Great Falls	Sept 20	Town House Inn	Chamber	761-4434	$40/50
Hamilton	Oct 4	Bitterroot Inn	Chamber	363-2400	$35/40
Missoula	Oct 5	Quality Inn	Chamber	543-6623	$35/45

Bring A Boxed Lunch

Kalispell's No Cost Blueprint for Business Success Brown Bag Series occurring from Noon-1pm
Location: The Summit, 205 Sunnyview Lane
Sept 13, Retain & Engage Your Talent: Success Stories
Oct 11, How's Your Business? Benchmarks to Know Your Progress
Nov 8, Be A Better Speaker: No Mystery Here!
Dec 13, Dealing Effectively with Hostility and Violence in the Workplace
*Contact: Mora McCarthy, **mmccarthy@mt.gov** or (406)758-6241*

Ticket Please

Exceptional Customer Service, with guest presenter Steve Beck
Sept 21, Fergus Center for Performing Arts (Lewistown), 8am - Noon
Sept 26, Sidney Hockey Dome (Sidney), 8am – Noon and 1:30pm – 5:30 pm
Sept 27, Dawson Community College (Glendive), 8am – Noon
Oct 11, (Part II), Fergus Center for Performing Arts (Lewistown), 8am - Noon

Registration fee applies. Contact: Janis Duffy (Lewistown), 535-1564; Vernette Togerson (Sidney) 433-1204; or Lonnie Cross (Glendive) 377-3314.

2006 Arbitration and Labor Relations Conference, Sept 20-22, GranTree Inn, Bozeman. Registration fee applies. Contact: Vicki Knudsen 444-0038. Agenda/online registration **http://erd.dli.mt.gov/laborstandard/conference/confregform.asp**

5th Annual Human Resources Conference, High Performance Cultures, Sept 26-28, Rock Creek Resort (Red Lodge). Registration fee applies. Contact: Dept of Admin, Human Resources, 444- 3871. Conference agenda **http://hrconference.mt.gov/agenda.asp**

Montana Employer Rights and Responsibilities, Writing and Administering Effective Personnel Policies, Sept 20, 8:30 am - 4:30pm, Wingate Inn, 2305 Catron (Bozeman). Registration fee applies. Contact: Nancy Axtell or Dexter Wester, 582-9200

Workers' Compensation Educational Conference, **Understanding National and State Issues in Workers' Compensation**, January 10-11, 2007, Helena. For more information, please visit **http://erd.dli.mt.gov/wcstudyproject/educonf/educonfhome.asp.**

Next Stop

The Occupational Safety and Health Training Institute offers employers access to both basic and advanced occupational Safety and Health training, at no cost, to increase workers safety and health in Montana. To view a schedule by city visit, **www.montanasafety.com**, click on "Safety and Health" and "Training Institute. For more information, please contact (406) 444-6401 or **dtoney@mt.gov**.

Montana's Council on Worklife Wellness is soliciting nominations for the first-ever Wellness Awards, in recognition of Montana businesses that are leaders in worksite wellness. For award criteria, application forms, and conference agenda click on "Worklife Wellness" at **http://montanacardiovascular.mt.gov** . Application submission is January 3-31, 2007. Awards will be presented at the 2nd Annual Worklife Wellness Conference on May 8-9.

Check out our extended menu of events on
http://app.mt.gov/cal/event?calendar

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