



SPRING 2014



THE **Montana Workforce**

RETOOLING FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

INSIDE:

- Revolutionizing Montana's workforce
- Giving a voice to Main Street
- Setting the standard
- Equal pay for equal work



WINTER 2014



Montana Department of
LABOR & INDUSTRY

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A note from the Commissioner

Montana opened the new year in a position of strength. We closed 2013 with an unemployment rate of 5.2%, compared to 7% national-wide. Now, we are looking forward to a new year of growth and opportunities for businesses, workers, and families.

With unemployment this low, our next challenge will be increasing wages, finding better job matches for workers, and increasing the overall skills-base of Montana's workforce. In this issue of *Main Street Montana*, you'll see that we are stepping up to this challenge.

As we look to grow Montana's economy, we are committed to expanding opportunities for all Montanans, so that every worker can earn a livable wage, support their family, and enjoy our incredible quality of life under Montana's Big Sky.

The Montana Department of Labor and Industry is committed to the economic vitality and success of both workers and their employers. In this issue of *Main Street Montana*, you'll see the incredible work that is being done to

provide valuable on-the-job training to workers, retool local communities to meet the high-skill needs of the 21st Century economy, promote safe workplaces, help injured workers get back to work, and supporting the unemployed as they face the uncertainty of career transitions.

It's an exciting time to be engaged in public service for the people of Montana. As your Labor Commissioner, I am dedicated to promoting a culture of excellent customer service and innovation in our policies and programs. We recognize your hard work, and we're here to support your success. Thank you for making Montana communities a great place to work, play, and raise our families.

—PAM BUCY, *Commissioner*
Montana Department of Labor & Industry

In this issue:

- 4 The Fluctuating Labor Force Participation Rate in the U.S. and Montana**
What's really behind Montana's declining labor force?
- 5 Revolutionizing Montana's Workforce Development System**
A new multi-million dollar grant will give Montanans the opportunity to train for quality jobs in the energy and advanced manufacturing sector, boosting the Treasure State's economy.
- 6 The Healthcare Workforce: an Important Part of Montana's Economy**
An apple a day may keep the doctor away, but did you know that the healthcare industry is a key economic driver in rural communities?
- 7 Economic Development from the Ground Up**
The Main Street Montana Project tackles the creation, recruitment and retention of Montana jobs.
- 8 The Stats on Montana's Workforce**
- 9 Montana Women: Earning a Fair Day's Pay for a Fair Day's Work**
Gender bias in the workplace is far broader than pay inequity.
- 10 Montana is getting older**
New challenges lie ahead for the Treasure State as its population gets older.
- 12 Setting the Standard**
Jobs for Montana's Graduates and its students are at the top of the class.
- 13 Montana Apprenticeship: Changing for the 21st Century**
- 16 New High School Equivalency Test for Montanans**
- 17 Teaching Employees "Soft Skills"**
While technical knowledge of a job is important, employers are finding ways to teach their employees soft skills as a part of career readiness.
- 18 Economic Development in Indian Country**
The State Tribal Economic Development Commission is taking a two-pronged approach to improving the economies of Montana's seven Indian Reservations.
- 19 Workforce Navigators**
The Trade Adjustment Assistance and Community College and Career Training Program.
- 20 Pioneering Partnership: Gardiner Gateway Project**
A joint effort between federal, state, county and local non-profits is addressing traffic flow challenges for a well-traveled community, while preserving the town's character.



- 21 UI eServices Right on Track**
Developing the next-generation state UI tax computer system.
- 22 Employment: The Ultimate Frontier**
A look at how the Unemployment Insurance Division verifies UI claimant work searches.
- 23 Raising Awareness**
Creating safer workplaces results in a multitude of benefits.
- 24 Know Your Rights and Responsibilities as an Employer**
Learning from others is an element of success.
- 25 Apprenticeship: Improving your Bottom Line**
Apprenticeship training is going strong, and there's good reasons why.
- 26 Strategic Safety**
SafetyFestMT fosters a culture of workforce safety.
- 27 Upcoming events**

The Fluctuating Labor Force

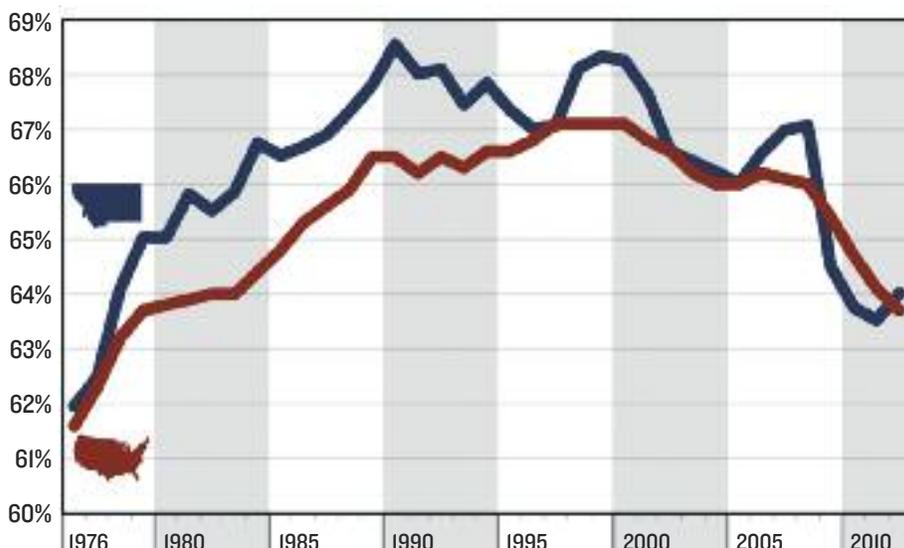
Over the last 60 years, the labor force participation rate in the U.S. and Montana has evolved considerably. The labor force participation rate is the percentage of the working-age population that is working or looking for work. **BY WILLIAM CONNELL, Economist**

During the last 15 years, the labor force participation rate at the national and state levels has declined considerably. While it is true that this decline picked up steam during the recession, much of the decline is the result of long-run demographic and cultural shifts. Just as the baby-boomer population was responsible for the stable growth in the labor force participation rate from the 1970s through the 1990s, this group is now contributing to the decline in the labor force as they retire. However, because this group's relative labor force participation rate has increased by more than 10 percentage points in the last decade, the total labor force participation rate is declining somewhat less than expected.

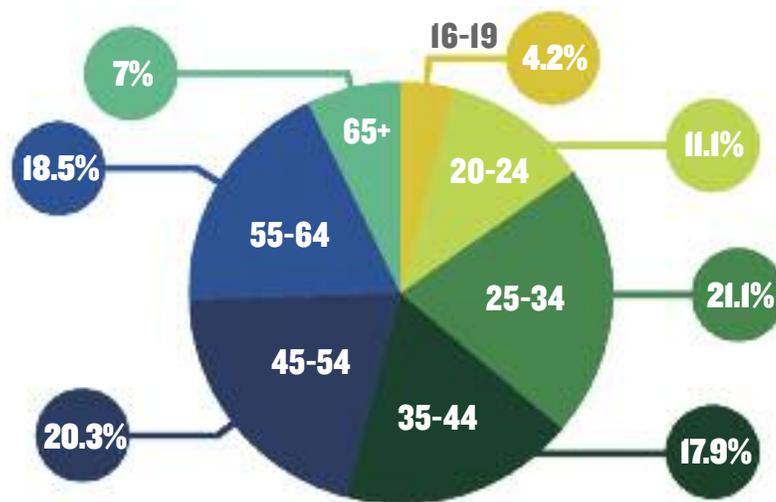
The long-run trend of a growing female labor force participation rate came to an end in the late 1990s, and since has been on the decline. It is also likely that the technology bubble in the late-1990s attracted more people to the labor market than would have otherwise entered, and as the economy slowed, more people exited the labor force, driving down the labor force participation rate.

Montana has one of the oldest populations in the country, and thus thousands of people are exiting the labor force annually. The decline in Montana's labor force participation rate is exacerbated by the decline in the rate of labor force entrants in the 16-24 year-old range. On the surface, this may seem alarming. However, data on college achievement and enrollment suggest that these folks are investing in human capital and entering college at higher rates than in the past. In the short-term, this may result in a lower labor force participation rate, but in the future we can expect to have a more educated and capable workforce than in the past. 🌟

Montana and U.S. Labor Force Participation Rate



Montana Labor Force by Age



WHO IS IN THE LABOR FORCE?

Civilian non-institutional population: Persons 16 years and older residing in the 50 states and the District of Columbia, who are not inmates of institutions (e.g., penal and mental facilities, homes for the aged), and who are not on active duty in the Armed Forces.

Civilian labor force: All persons in the civilian non-institutional population classified as either employed or unemployed.

Employed persons: All persons who were employed by a business, or who worked in their own business or farm, or worked 15 hours or more as unpaid workers in an enterprise operated by a member of their family. Includes those who were not working but who had jobs from which they were temporarily absent.

Unemployed persons: All persons who had no employment during

the reference week, were available for work, except for temporary illness, and had made specific efforts to find employment some time during the 4 week-period ending with the reference week.

Discouraged Workers: Persons not in the labor force who want and are available for a job and who have looked for work sometime in the past 12 months, but who are not currently looking because they believe there are no jobs available or there are none for which they would qualify.



\$25 Million SWAMMEI Grant: Revolutionizing Montana's Workforce Development System

BY DR. JOHN CECH, Deputy Commissioner for Two-Year and Community College Education, Montana University System

On September 23, 2013, Montana's economy received a huge boost—\$25 million from the U.S. Department of Labor to prepare Montanans to get quality jobs in energy and advanced manufacturing.

Funded through the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) program, SWAMMEI has already started to revolutionize Montana's workforce development system. Fifty-seven businesses partnered with a consortium comprised of 13 Montana colleges, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, and the Montana Department of Labor and Industry to assemble a high-quality program that will open opportunities for workers and employers across Montana.

"Partnership is the key to the program's success," said U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez in announcing these grant awards. "In fact, it's a prerequisite for a TAACCCT award. This is about education, labor, business and community leaders coming together to meet the real-world challenges of a complex global economy."

Montana's grant partnership identified a fundamental challenge for Montana's public education and workforce system: How do you retrain a widely dispersed group of un-

denial workers for the emerging, widely dispersed jobs in advanced manufacturing and the energy fields?

To address this challenge, SWAMMEI offers job seekers access to accelerated, technology-enhanced training available anywhere in the State. Using a common delivery system, SWAMMEI utilizes stacked credentials that feature interactive, online curricula coupled with consolidated practical training. This approach meets the needs of both Montana's dispersed workforce and dispersed energy and manufacturing industries while improving access and accelerating training.

"Montanans must be trained with the skills to compete in the 21st century workforce," said Governor Steve Bullock. "Our



two-year colleges play a crucial role in equipping our students with the skills and experience to meet the needs of employers wanting to do business in Montana. This grant will help our colleges have the resources they need to ensure they are training our students for the jobs that are in demand."

.....
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.....

"I am committed to two-year education. This grant represents an incredible opportunity for Montana's ten public two-year colleges and tribal college partners to serve 10,000 individuals over the next four years in the areas of energy and advanced manufacturing workforce development," said Commissioner of Higher Education Clayton Christian. "Montana's two-year colleges are at the heart of providing responsive workforce development opportunities." ❁

Healthcare Workforce: An Important Part of Montana's Economy

The National Center for Rural Health Works studies the economic impact of healthcare on the economies of rural states. Their research has shown that the healthcare workforce is a key economic driver for communities.

BY KRISTIN JULIAR, Director, Montana Office of Rural Health/Area Health Education Center (AHEC)

Healthcare jobs are especially important in small rural communities, where local hospitals and clinics, along with the school are often the biggest employers in town.

What is the impact? Rural Health Works reports:

One primary care physician in a rural community:

- ▶ Creates 23 jobs annually.
- ▶ Generates \$1.0 million in wages, salaries and benefits annually.
- ▶ Generates approximately \$1.8 million in annual total revenue.

Critical Access Hospitals

- ▶ A typical critical access hospital has a medical service area population of 14,600, has 141 employees and generates \$6.8 million in payroll annually.
- ▶ The total economic impact of a typical critical access hospital is 195 employees and \$8.4 million in payroll.

The Montana Healthcare Workforce Advisory Committee (MHWAC) is a group of over 100 organizations and individuals supported by the MT Office of Rural Health/AHEC. It is working to assure that Montana has the healthcare workforce it needs to meet the future demands for healthcare and a healthy economy in our state. The MHWAC found that the healthcare industry has been a rare bright spot in the recent recession. The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that 26% of all new jobs created in the US economy from 2008 to 2018 will be in the health care sector. In Montana, the healthcare industry has had a higher rate of employment growth over the last 10 years than the state as a whole. Healthcare employment growth increased by 30% or 13,478 jobs from 2000-2009. It has also held strong through the recession. Future projections indicate that healthcare positions will

grow from 57,898 to 73,311 (or 26.6 % growth) for the 2010 to 2020 time period.

Montana faces challenges in supporting the growth and retention of its healthcare workforce:

- ▶ Uneven distribution of the workforce – it continues to be a challenge to recruit and retain healthcare professionals in the most rural parts of the state.
- ▶ Growing our own workforce—the best strategy is to encourage young people in rural Montana to look to careers in healthcare. We must prepare them academically to achieve, find opportunities for them to train in rural communities, and match them to jobs in our communities.

▶ Understanding what the workforce needs will be for the future—good data on our healthcare workforce helps make good decisions about resource allocation. Changes in how care is provided—using technology, telemedicine, new care coordination models, and a focus on research and quality improvement, challenge us to prepare healthcare professionals for new models of care.

The healthcare workforce is an economic driver for Montana's communities. The investments we make today in that workforce will help assure a healthy economy for the state far into the future. 🌟





Left: Governor Bullock discusses ideas with Main Street Project Roundtable participants

Economic Development from the Ground Up

Governor Steve Bullock created the Main Street Montana Project to build a business plan to support the creation, recruitment and retention of Montana jobs.

BY ANNIE GLOVER, Director of Special Projects, Montana Department of Labor & Industry

Following through on his belief that the private sector knows best how to create jobs in the state, Governor Bullock tasked Larry Simkins, President and CEO of the Washington Companies, and Bill Johnstone, President and Chairman and CEO of D.A. Davidson & Co. with leading the Main Street Montana Project.

The Project aims to tap into the work-ethic and ingenuity of Montanans to ensure that Montana’s economy remains strong for

years to come.

“When the Governor asked us to take on this role, he assured us that all ideas would receive fair consideration, that it would be non-partisan and non-political, that it would be driven by the private sector and that it would be designed to produce practical and concrete solutions,” said Johnstone. “Throughout this project, the Governor has been true to his word and we are committed to these principles.”

Since its launch in May 2013, the Main Street Montana Project has hosted seven Roundtables around Montana. So far, the Project has received broad support, with about 1000 Montanans from the business, workforce development, economic development, nonprofit, agriculture, and local government sectors participating in the Roundtables.

During October and November, approxi-

mately 2000 Montanans also responded to the Main Street Montana Project’s County Survey, with 64% of respondents coming from the private sector. Participants have been universally impressed with the Administration’s commitment to an authentic economic development planning process and Governor Bullock’s personal dedication to this process.

“At the Roundtables and on our County Surveys, it’s evident that Montanans see the value in our vast and diverse natural resources—resources that can drive both tourism and energy development,” said Simkins. “Our quality of life was the most common economic development strength listed, and we are hearing education reinforced as a key economic driver all over the state. The key to this process, and to building our state’s business plan, is to capitalize on these strengths and address our challenges to bring more economic prosperity to our state.”

The Main Street Project is in the process of compiling data from the Roundtables, the County Survey, industry meetings, meetings with education leaders, and individual meetings with business leaders and analyzing this information for the final report.. This report, set to be released in the first quarter of 2014, will include data collected from every single county in Montana, with this public input forming the basis for economic development recommendations. The Main Street Montana



Report will provide a blueprint for economic development in Montana—the first ever to be written from the ground up by Montanans.

“Montana is in a position of strength,” said Bullock. “It’s our responsibility to use this strength to continue to bring new jobs to the state, increase prosperity for Montana businesses small and large, and ensure that economic opportunities continue to grow for our kids and grandkids. Creating good-paying, quality jobs and opportunities for Montana working families is at the top of my administration’s agenda, and we work to expand economic prosperity each and every day.”



Left: Lt. Governor John Walsh asking Roundtable participants for their ideas.



The Stats on Montana's Labor Force

BY MARY CRAIGLE, Census & Economic Information Center Montana Department of Commerce

Since the 1970's, the percentage of "traditional" working age (15-64) women residents in Montana has been less relative to the percentage of males in this same age group.

According to US Census figures, in 1970, Montana men and women residents of working age were nearly equal. Of the 694,409 Montana residents in 1970, 30.2% were men between 15-64 years of age and 30.0% were women in this age range. As Figure 1 shows, there has been a widening gap between the percentage of Montana men and women of working age. Although both working age men and women Montanans have increased as a percentage of the total population from 60.2% in 1970 to 66.6% in 2010, the number of women of working age has not increased at the same rate as the men. The number of men of working age increased from 209,403 in 1970 to 333,971 in 2010 – a 59% increase. Working age

women have increased from 208,340 to 324,420 which is a 56% increase. Several trends including women's longevity and economic migration both are contributors to this proportional change.

As Figure 2 shows, going forward, the gap in working age men and women is expected to continue through 2040. Equally important, the total number of working age men and women relative to Montana's entire population is expected to decline. In 2010, the Census reported 66.5% of Montana residents were ages 15 - 64. The projections in Figure 2 show this number falling to 59.1% in 2030.

The rate of participation by gender in the labor force is another factor that impacts Montana's available workers. Statistics from the US Census Bureau Current Population Survey in Figure 3 shows the participation rate of Montanans below 64 years of age by gender.

As the Figure 3 shows, the participation rate has also fallen in the past several years from highs in 2007 prior to the Great Recession.

The lower percentage of women ages 15-64 compared

to men, the projected decline in the traditional working age population of both genders, and declines in labor force participation are all important trends to better understand and monitor. Having a sufficient number of workers is essential for maintaining Montana's economic growth, not to mention having potential employees with the right skills and training.

Fig. 1: Percentage of MT Residents of Traditional Working Age (15-64)

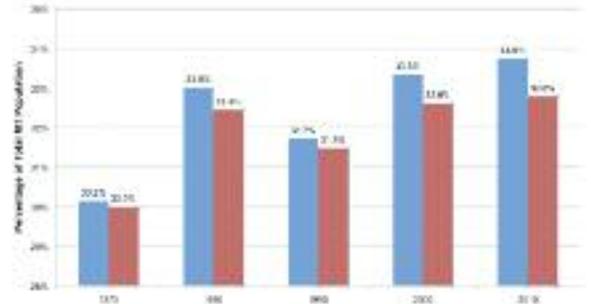


Fig. 2: Projected MT Residents of Traditional Working Age (15-64)

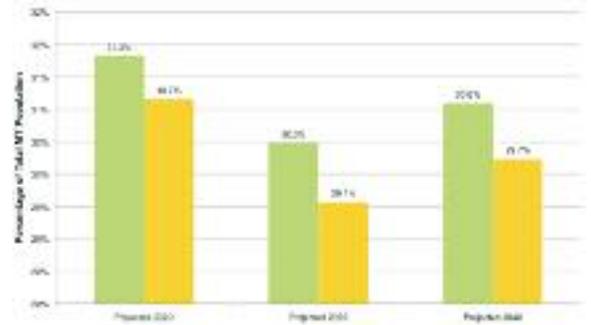
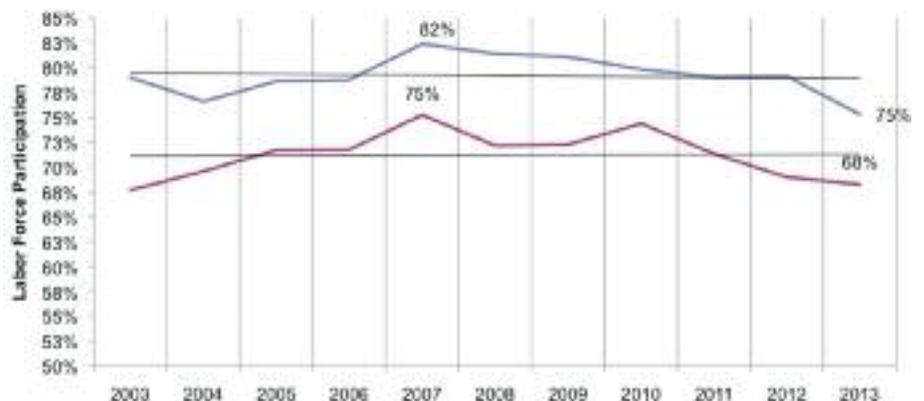


Fig. 3: Montana Labor Force Participation Rate by Gender





Montana Women: Earning a Fair Day's Pay for a Fair Day's Work

Gender bias in the workplace is far broader than pay inequity, and usually, this bias is unintended and happens at a subconscious level.

BY ANNIE GLOVER, Director of Special Projects, Montana Department of Labor and Industry

Gender bias in the workplace is far broader than pay inequity, and usually, this bias is unintended and happens at a subconscious level.

At their latest meeting in December, the Governor's Equal Pay for Equal Work Task Force heard from Dr. Jessi Smith, a social psychologist from MSU-Bozeman who spoke to ingrained and unintentional bias that deprives working women of equitable compensation, promotion, and hiring in all kinds of workplaces in every corner of the U.S.

Through her presentation of studies that have been conducted with managers and

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www.equalpay.mt.gov

human resources professionals from an array of disciplines, Dr. Smith argued that the Task Force must be willing to tackle the issue of pay inequity with creativity and an open mind.

"Shifting standards are one way that keeps the pay gap alive," said Dr. Smith. "This is the notion that, 'She makes a lot of money—for a woman. She runs fast—for a girl!'"

Dr. Smith also described studies that showed that when presented with identical resumes for two job candidates—a woman with children and a man—the mother was 79% less likely to get hired, was offered \$11,000 less in starting salary, and held to higher performance and punctuality standards than the man who had the exact same education and experience.

While there are different standards for

men and women, overt discrimination is no longer socially and legally acceptable. This creates a trickier situation—a challenge that cannot be solved purely through changes in policy.

"There are ways to get rid of our ingrained and even unaware biases that we might have through some pretty simple practices," said Task Force Co-Chair Pam Bucy. "We can talk to women about how to negotiate for pay and benefits and how to do it transparently. And we can work to make managers aware of their own unconscious biases so that they can make better hiring decisions, reward talent, and find the best employees to grow their businesses and organizations, regardless of their gender."

To meet the myriad factors contributing to pay inequity in Montana, the Task Force committed to hosting an Equal Pay Summit in Bozeman on April 1 at MSU-Bozeman. The Summit will be kicked off by a keynote speech from Lilly Ledbetter on the evening of March 31. To stay up to date or get more information about this free event, please visit www.equalpay.mt.gov and "like" the Equal Pay for Equal Work Task Force on Facebook. 🌐





Montana is Getting Older

As Montana's population ages, the State will face new challenges moving into the future.

BY JOE RAMLER, Census & Economic Information Center, Montana Department of Commerce

Montana's population growth is projected to continue into the near future. At the same time, a larger share of the State's population is expected to get older. As Montana begins to see a proportionally higher number of older individuals, new challenges lie ahead for the State.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, from 1990 to 2010, Montana's population increased by 23.5 percent (190,350 people) representing an average increase of 1.2 percent annually. Looking forward, the State's population is expected to grow by 16.9 percent (167,079 people) from 2010 to 2030—an annual average growth rate of 0.8 percent.

Three factors affect population change: babies being born (births), individuals passing away (deaths), and people deciding to move into or out of the area (net migration). These simultaneous events subsequently determine the growth or decline of an area's population.

The net effect from births and deaths makes up the natural change within an area's population. If more babies are born than there are deaths, a natural increase in residents occurs. Conversely, if more individuals pass away than are born, an area's population will realize a natural decline.

In Montana, the rate of births relative to deaths has been falling, and this trend is expected to continue. It's projected that by 2035, the number of deaths will surpass the number

of babies born every year; this translates to natural decline within the State's population. However, natural change is not the only factor that determines population change.

Net migration is expected to be the significant driver of Montana's population growth for the next couple of decades. People decide to move into or out of an area for a variety of reasons. It's expected the majority of individuals moving into Montana in the short term will be for economic reasons—employment, start a business, etc. Over the long term, however, it's expected more and more individuals are going to move into Big Sky Country for retirement.

The combination of current Montana residents aging in place, an increased number of individuals moving into the State for retirement, and a decreasing birth rate is shifting the State's population into an older demographic.

An aging Montana population will undoubtedly bring challenges as well as opportunities which will require changes in the way we plan for the State's future.

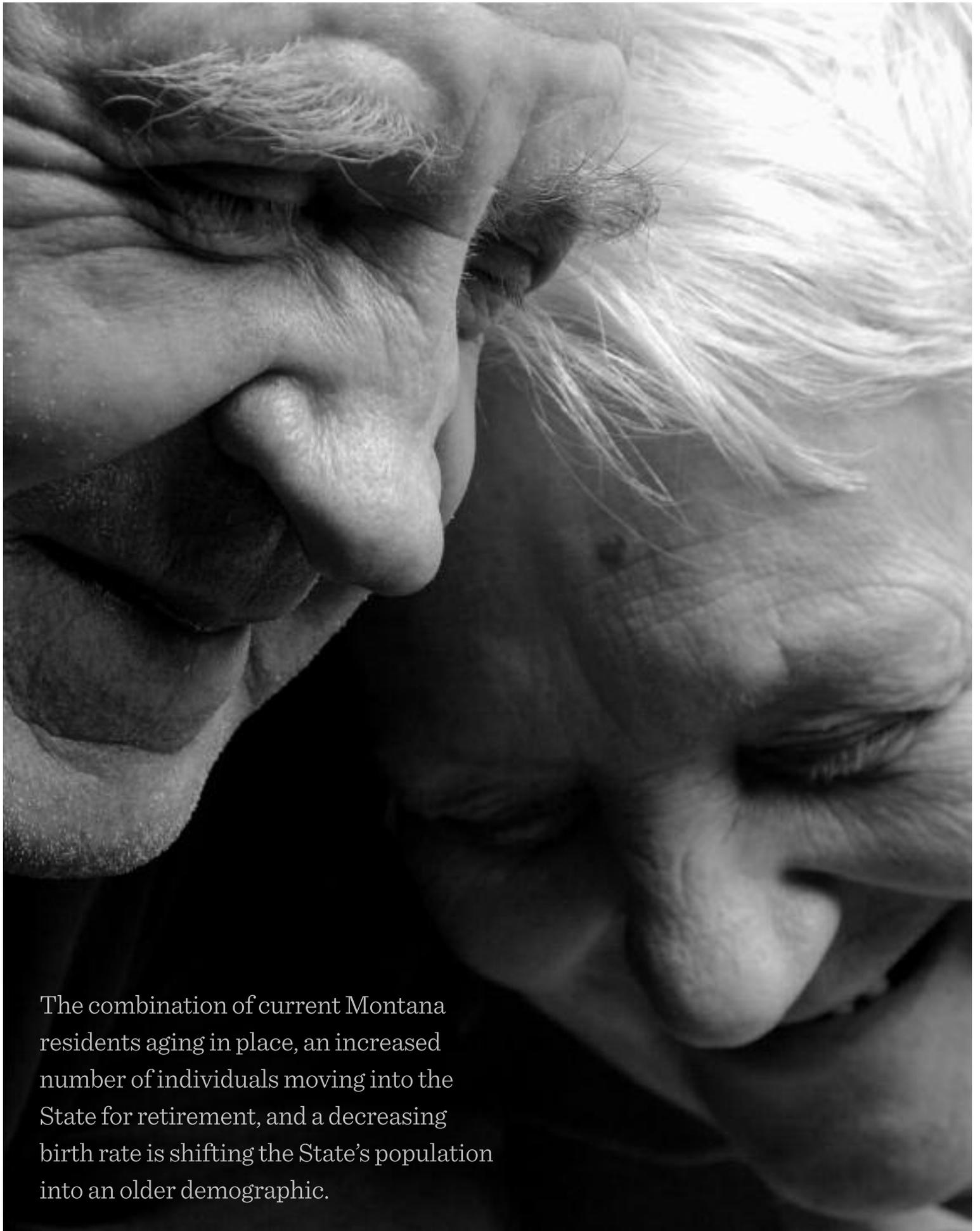
In 1990, 13.3 percent of Montana residents were age 65 years or older; by 2010, that proportion had crept up to 14.8 percent. By 2030, it's expected 23.2 percent of the State's population will be at or above the "conventional" retirement age of 65 years old. Conversely, 36.7 percent of the State's population was under the age of 25 in 1990. By 2010, that proportion had dropped to 32.2 percent and by 2030 it's expected that 28.7 percent of Montanans will be under the age of 25.

With an aging population come new challenges. Economic growth largely depends on the availability of able workers and entrepreneurs to fill new and vacated jobs. The combination of a diminishing number of future workers—people age 0 to 24 years old—and an increasing number of people moving out of the workforce into retirement will pose a challenge for maintaining economic growth in the future.

As people age their needs change. For example, access to health care and emergency services becomes more important requiring the need for an increased number of nurses, doctors, and first responders. Housing needs shift from multi-room, larger family-style homes to smaller, single-level residences with easier access and less maintenance.

However, an older demographic has positive implications for Montana as well. Individuals moving into an area after their working-years bring with them savings and retirement income. Retirement savings such as 401k's, pensions, Social Security benefits, and personal savings spent in the State helps to create jobs and economic growth within local communities. Also, people who are not working generally have more time for community oriented services such as volunteering which has benefits to the State.

An aging Montana population will undoubtedly bring challenges as well as opportunities which will require changes in the way we plan for the State's future. The way we think about things like housing developments and access to facilities will need to accommodate an older demographic. A need for an increased number of workers in the health care industry will demand a closer look at how students are recruited and trained for future employment opportunities. Proactive measures taken today and changes in planning moving forward will put Montana in a position to meet the challenges and leverage the benefits brought about by an aging population. ☀



The combination of current Montana residents aging in place, an increased number of individuals moving into the State for retirement, and a decreasing birth rate is shifting the State's population into an older demographic.

Setting the Standard

“Success Against the Odds!” that’s this year’s motto for the Department of Labor and Industry’s Jobs for Montana’s Graduates (JMG) Program. And if the accolades the program is receiving are any indication of its success, JMG is living up to that motto.

BY CASEY KYLER-WEST Communications Director, Montana Department of Labor & Industry

For the eighth year in a row JMG received the prestigious “5 of 5” award from Jobs for America’s Graduates (JAG). Montana’s JMG program ranks number one in the nation for positive outcomes. “JMG’s continued success is a testament to the hard work and dedication of both the students and the career specialists who work with them,” said Labor Commissioner Pam Bucy. “To see so many students who faced barriers to graduation succeed and receive national recognition is extremely rewarding.”

Students are also being recognized at the national level. Each year four students are chosen to attend the Annual Jobs for America’s Graduates Academy in Washington D. C.; this year two JMG students took top spots in the Academy’s competitive events.

Sierra Garza a student at Helena High took first place in the Employability Skills Competition. “The JAG Leadership Confer-



Above: JMG students Jordan Monroe, Abigail Dronen, Felicia Earhart and Sierra Garza in front of the U.S. Capitol building.

Right: JMG State Director Erica Swanson, Career Specialist Yenta Jaques and Governor Jack Markell of Delaware and National Chair for JAG



Abigail Dronen, a student at the Project for Alternative Learning in Helena, took second place in Public Speaking. “Washington D.C. was incredible, there were so many beautiful things that I never thought I’d be able to see. JMG has not only given me the skills I need to be successful in the workplace, but it has given me the ability to believe in myself and the opportunity to see our nation’s Capital. It was a life changing experience and I would do it

again in a heartbeat,” said Dronen. “This trip was an unforgettable experience. I’d never been further east than Wyoming, Washington D.C. had so many things to see, it really was amazing,” said Monroe. “It was exciting to have the opportunity to travel somewhere new, and the change of culture and the people were vastly different than in Montana,” said Earhart.

It wasn’t just the students earning recognition; Career Specialist Yenta Jaques from the Paris Gibson Program received a scholarship from The Apollo Group/University of Phoenix. Yenta plans to use the scholarship to complete her Masters for Leadership in Education.

JMG currently serves approximately 950 students in 27 High Schools, 12 Middle Schools, seven alternative High Schools and one “Out-of-School” Program. ☀

“JMG has not only given me the skills I need to be successful in the workplace, but it has given me the ability to believe in myself and the opportunity to see our nation’s Capital. It was a life changing experience and I would do it again in a heartbeat.”

ence was beyond amazing. The skills I learned while attending the Conference will help me successfully interview for jobs and become a stronger leader both in and out of school,” said Garza. “It was a once in a lifetime experience.”

Jordan Monroe, a student at the Paris Gibson Program of Great Falls and Felicia Earhart from Plains High School also attended the Academy in D.C. Monroe, who has Asperger’s Syndrome, credits JMG for helping him de-

Montana Apprenticeship: Changing for the 21st Century

BY DARREL HOLZER, State Director, Montana Department of Labor & Industry Apprenticeship & Training Program

First the good news: Employer demand for skilled workers is skyrocketing and that trend is expected to continue. Some of this demand is being driven by the oil field development in the Eastern part of the state. New dollars being generated from the Bakken oil boom, coupled with an overall economic recovery, is percolating job growth statewide.

Now the bad news; Montana, like the rest of the nation, has a severe shortage of workers who possess the skills employers need, especially in the advanced manufacturing sector. In Manufacturing Institute, a February 2011 skills gap report stated there were more than 600,000 unfilled manufacturing jobs in the US. Here in Montana, the same is true in virtually every skilled trade. The “Baby Boomer” skilled tradesmen are retiring by the thousands and there are not nearly enough trained workers to adequately fill the skills gap being created.

The Montana Apprenticeship & Training Program needs to be part of the solution, and we are trying to find new and creative ways to get the word out about what the program is and how it can help businesses find quality

workers NOW. The Program is taking immediate steps to promote and develop pre-apprenticeship training programs in high schools across the state. These programs allow high school students to start building skill sets and academic credentials for high demand jobs much earlier than in the past. Students who qualify can begin these programs while they’re juniors and seniors in high school. Once their pre-apprenticeship requirements have been satisfied, students will complete their training and education by seamlessly transitioning into a registered apprenticeship training program.

This approach accelerates students to the journey worker skill level much more quickly than requiring students be at least 18 before starting an apprenticeship training program. This may require some modification of the traditional high school curriculum. If we are to start preparing for the acute skilled worker shortage projected in the next 10 years, we have to start now. Pre-apprenticeship provides a road to great paying jobs as well as making sure Montana has skilled workers for the future.

Higher Education appreciates the value

and importance of the apprenticeship training model, which is demonstrated by their willingness to offer significant and transferable academic credit towards a four year degree based upon successful completion of certain registered apprenticeship training programs. Higher education also designs and manages much of the full apprentice’s coursework load, truly creating a “learn while you earn” scenario.

Not all high school graduates are college bound. Whether it is the cost or lack of interest, bright promising people of every age are getting lost in the system. Apprenticeship offers the tools and skills these job seekers require to work in many highly skilled, good-paying jobs.

The Apprenticeship & Training Program is fully committed to working tirelessly with higher education, our public schools, employer organizations and all of the workforce system partners to help our state grow and prosper. Together we can promote and develop meaningful, sustainable career opportunities for our citizens in over 1,000 apprenticeable occupations, as well as provide the services and skills that are needed by Montana businesses. ❁



Above: Electrical Classroom Training. Top right: Sheet Metal Local 103 apprentice. Bottom right: Ironworker Apprentices working on a major construction project.



The Montana Department of Labor and Industry exists to promote and protect the well-being of Montana's workers, employers and citizens, and to uphold their rights and responsibilities.



Montana Department of
LABOR & INDUSTRY



New High School Equivalency Test for Montanans

After 50 years, Montana is replacing the General Education Development Test or GED, with the new High School Equivalency Exam called HiSet.

BY MARGARET BOWLES, Adult Literacy and Basic Education Director, Office of Public Instruction

The change to HiSet comes after an announcement by GEDTS, a new for-profit corporation formed by the American Council on Education and Pearson, that the cost to take the GED Test was increasing to \$120; it is computer based only and any retakes of the exam would cost \$24.

As a result of these changes the Board of Public Education approved a new contract

between the Office of Public Instruction and Educational Testing Service (ETS). “Montanans who are looking to improve their economic situation by obtaining a high school equivalency diploma should not have to overcome a significant financial barrier in order to achieve that goal. I am confident this new exam will meet the needs of our state and provide a rigorous assessment of the knowl-

edge and skills needed to succeed in college and careers,” said Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau.

The new test also means changes for employers as well; now when looking at job applications, employers will have to take into account whether or not someone has a HiSET certificate or GED in place of a High School Diploma. “Individuals who take the time to prepare for and take the high school equivalent test are just as employable as someone that has a high school diploma”, said Labor Commissioner Pam Bucy. “By taking the test, they are showing they have the skills to advance in the job market, or re-enter the educational pipeline and further their education.”

The HiSET exam will still test individuals on five sections, reading, writing, math social studies, and science. If an individual needs to retake a portion of the exam they can do so up to two times at no cost within the same calendar year.

In addition to Montana, eight other states have made the decision to adopt the HiSET: Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, Tennessee and Wyoming. 🌟

Teaching Employees “Soft Skills”

CTE’s “Big Sky Pathways” in Montana, focus on the students’ transition from high school to postsecondary, including an analysis of their academic and CTE courses from 9th grade to degree.

BY KALI WICKS, High School to College Pathways Program Manager/Perkins Accountability Specialist

In recent years, you have probably heard the term “soft skills” more than a few times. You may have even uttered the words yourself a time or two, telling your spouse or a co-worker, “I wish I could hire more staff members with decent soft-skills!” If this sounds familiar, you are not alone. In fact, it turns out many of Montana’s employers would agree with you!

In the fall of 2013, twenty-eight members of Montana’s State CTE (Career & Technical Education) Advisory Board, which boasts representation from each of the 16 National Career Clusters, and is designed to assist the Montana Carl D. Perkins Program at the Office of Public Instruction & Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, met in Helena, where many members voiced the importance of soft skills as a part of career readiness. “I am interested in how to teach my young employees critical thinking, risk-taking and entrepreneurial spirit. I can teach them the technical skills,” said Dick Anderson, owner of Dick Anderson Construction. Anderson’s comments were echoed by Leisa Smith, Director of the Montana State Workforce Investment Board. “Time and time again, we hear that employers’ #1 priority is



soft skills. They can train anyone who can show up on time, think critically, and is able to problem solve with a positive attitude.”

So how, exactly, does one learn critical thinking, problem solving and time management? CTE of course! Advocates for Montana’s Career and Technical Programs state that many soft skills are built into foundational components of CTE programs of study. “Career and Technical Education programs of study often include work-based learning experiences and internships that give the student an opportunity to learn how to behave in a professional environment,” said Tom Kotynski, the Career and Technical Education Facilitator at Great Falls Public Schools. CTE Programs of Study, often called “Big Sky Pathways” in Montana, focus on the students’ transition from high school to postsec-

ondary, including an analysis of their academic and CTE courses from 9th grade to degree. Along with work-based learning experiences, internships, and the ability to earn industry-recognized credentials like Certified Nursing Assistant or a Microsoft Office Specialist Certification, pathways may also include participation in a career technical student organization, such as FFA (Future Farmers of America) or SkillsUSA.

“I have personally seen the benefit of CTE classes and organizations,” said Tim McGonigal, an anchor and producer at KXLH-Helena and KRTV-Great Falls TV stations. “I have a daughter at Montana State University who was very shy as a child. She joined FFA, and had a great experience. She became the vice president of her local Future Farmers of America organization and is now Montana’s candidate for National FFA office. It has been a pleasure to watch her work with other youth and really encourage others to become leaders.”

To learn more about the State CTE Advisory Board, Big Sky Pathways, and Career and Technical Education in Montana, please visit: <http://mus.edu/BigSkyPathways/default.asp>



Tom Kotynski, Supervisor of Career and Technical Education for Great Falls Public Schools, shares his experiences works with the group to brainstorm ideas on advocating for CTE.” Also pictured: (right) Thompson Falls High School Counselor and President of Montana School Counselor’s Association Jodi Morgan; Department of Corrections Youth Services Administrator Cindy McKenzie; Billings Career Center Instructor Russell Walks; Community Counseling and Correctional Services staff Perry Howbacker; Montana Hospital Association Staff Victoria Cech.



Economic Development in Indian Country

Economic development is the key to any community's success, the same holds true in Indian Country.

BY JASON SMITH, Director, Governor's Office of Indian Affairs

The Department of Commerce's State Tribal Economic Development Commission (STEDC) is taking a two-pronged approach to improving the economies of Montana's seven Indian Reservations. The first part is developing a strategic plan. The Commission met on October 9, 2013 in Browning; to develop a plan and set realistic goals. Those goals include:

- ▶ Developing pathways for successful engineering of economic prosperity
- ▶ Developing and mobilizing mutually beneficial partnerships
- ▶ Communicating facts and information targeted to the listener
- ▶ Inventory current financial products, identify gaps and advise Indian Country on how to access the products
- ▶ Provide value by documenting demonstrated successes

The Commission is in the process of implementing the plan by identifying economic development issues facing each Reservation and potential partnerships that will help address those issues.

The second part is hosting Profit Mastery Training for Native American businesses advisors and Indian business owners. These two day workshops are intense sixteen hour sessions showing how the financial information of their business will assist them in making better decisions to maximize their profits. The STEDC networks with the Montana Indian Business Alliance (MIBA) and local community organizations including S&K Holding Company, Little Big Horn College and Chief Dull Knife College to provide training. "The Profit Mastery Training provides financial literacy to native small business owners to give them tools to be successful. Our focus is to

build the private sector by encouraging small business development in Indian Country", said Dr. Johnel Barkus, EDD, Executive Director of the Montana Indian Business Alliance.

The Business Advisors Best Practices Workshops are composed of members of community organizations that assist Native American Business Owners. During the workshops, advisors were asked to prioritize their best practices that assist businesses to obtain sustainability and lead their communities to successful economic growth; with a focus on how to best support business clients in accessing capital. "The Commission works to provide support to Montana Tribal Nations, native economic development organizations, and native owned small businesses to develop our economies in Indian Country, which will benefit the State of Montana as well", said Commissioner Chairman Shawn Real Bird.

These are just some of the ways the Commission, which was established by the Native American Act of 1997, is addressing the business development barriers. The overall goal of the STEDC is to champion economic development organizations and their capacity to assist Native American business owners as they create opportunity and jobs in their communities.

Breaking down the barriers to economic

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“The Profit Mastery Training provides financial literacy to native small business owners to give them tools to be successful.

.....

development on Montana's Reservations, not only benefits the Tribes and their people but all of us; when businesses can start or expand, they create jobs and new opportunities for the people in their communities.

Governor Bullock appoints Commission members who represent each of the Tribal Nations in Montana, the Governor's Offices of Indian Affairs and Economic Development, and the Department of Commerce. 🌟

Workforce Navigators

On September 18, the U.S. Department of Labor announced that a consortium of 13 Montana two-year colleges will receive nearly \$25 million through the Trade Adjustment Assistance and Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) program.

BY BRAD ELDREDGE PH.D., Executive Director of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning, Flathead Valley Community College

The grant will provide opportunities for technical training for high-demand occupations in emerging industries across the state. As part of this project, many colleges will hire “Workforce Navigators” to help students take full advantage of the educational and training opportunities available through both the Montana Department of Labor and Industry and Montana’s two-year colleges.

Flathead Valley Community College received an individual TAACCCT grant in 2012 and hired two navigators experienced in career counseling and placement. Their efforts are benefitting local businesses as well as students as they are able to focus on helping to meet the specific job needs of the employers while working with students to ensure they are pursuing fields of study in which they can succeed. Similar benefits should accrue in all Montana businesses as navigators are hired at many more two-year colleges.

“This project has allowed our college to work more closely with the manufacturing industry in our area so we can gain a better understanding of what needs employers have,” said Jori Bullemer, FVCC navigator. “It is enabling us to continually enhance our programs so we can train students with the specific skills employers are looking for. It’s a win-win for our students and our local employers.”

FVCC’s navigators administer the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) test. The NCRC measures proficiency in applied mathematics, locating information and reading for information. The NCRC is a vehicle for workers to certify their levels of proficiency and for businesses to assess potential employees in these universal job skills. The navigators will take on a proactive role of reaching out to local businesses with information on the NCRC and how it can help cut hiring costs and up-skill their workforce.

A point of emphasis in the TAACCCT grant program is the need to align education and training with the needs of employers.



Flathead Valley Community College advanced manufacturing students conduct a lab exercise.

It’s a win-win for our students and our local employers.”

Employer input informed every step of the grant writing process. Curriculum developed thus far is truly employer driven. Going forward, the workforce navigators will act as liaisons between the business community and the state’s education and training providers. The relationships they build with industry partners will ensure that training programs deliver graduates with local in-demand skills. Access to a quality workforce is critical to economic development and the success of individual businesses. The TAACCCT workforce navigators will play a key role in ongoing curriculum alignment efforts.

The relationships the navigators develop with their students, their local job service and local employers will students’ opportunities for placement in internships and permanent

employment. Internships and other experiential learning opportunities were seen by Flathead Valley employers as necessary for producing workforce ready graduates. The workforce navigators possess knowledge of both individual student’s skills and individual employer’s needs, and they can use that knowledge to match employers with students who can help them meet their business goals.

Many programs exist at the federal and state levels to help displaced workers retrain and re-enter the workforce. Likewise, two-year colleges offer many short-term degree and certificate programs designed to prepare graduates for immediate employment. However, working through the bureaucracy of these opportunities can be daunting. The workforce navigators provide a unique solution, helping students access all the benefits to which they are entitled, serving as advisors through the training process and helping match students with employers once they complete their training. ⚙️

Pioneering Partnership: Gardiner Gateway Project

BY BILL BERG

“Here is your country. Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources, cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children’s children.”

— PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT

It all began in 1871... James McCartney’s timing was off. He built a hotel at Mammoth Hot Springs in 1871. Mammoth was included when Yellowstone National Park became the World’s First National Park the next year. Superintendent Norris invited Mr. McCartney to leave in 1879, prompting a move across the border into Montana to the banks of the Yellowstone River. That led to a post office in 1880 and the first seeds of the community of Gardiner, laid out tight against the park boundary.

The most ambitious year in Gardiner’s history was probably 1903 with the construction of the Arch, the iconic Gardiner Depot and the W. A. Hall Store, current home of the Yellowstone Association. That year also saw the arrival of passenger rail service and a visit by President Theodore Roosevelt, who dedicated the Arch that now carries his name—Roosevelt Arch. These projects were carefully orchestrated to create a sense of arrival to Yellowstone for visitors arriving via rail who then entered Yellowstone through the Arch by stagecoach.

America’s love affair with the automobile was apparent by 1930 when the bridge was built over the Yellowstone River, drastically changing the arrival sequence. The era of passenger rail service was over and the depot was removed in 1954, replaced by a freight depot that served in that capacity until the early 1970’s when the tracks were permanently removed.



Clockwise from top left: Gardiner, circa 1910; Gardiner today; President Roosevelt speaks at the dedication of the Arch, 1903; Bison pass through the Roosevelt Arch, present day.



The Roosevelt Arch was built to accommodate stagecoaches, allowing one from either direction at a time, a constraint that now applies to cars, motorhomes and tour buses. In the 110 years since it was constructed, we’ve transitioned from horses to cars, visitors have increased from under 20,000 to well over 3,000,000 and the zigzag pattern required to bring visitors into Gardiner, through the Arch and into Yellowstone has created traffic flow challenges for decades.

The Gardiner Gateway Project is a joint effort between 17 partners comprised of federal, state, county, local and non-profit entities to address those challenges. The goal is to better meet the needs of today’s residents and visitors and anticipate needs in decades to come as the National Park Service approaches its 100th birthday and as Yellowstone approaches its 150 th. “We are blessed to have a partnership resonating locally, regionally, and nationally. Through addressing basic infrastructure needs this project helps enhance year-round access to the world’s first national park. Studies show that every federal dollar invested in national parks returns ten dollars in local economic activity. The Gardiner Gateway Project will provide continued economic vitality for our future generations”,

said Daniel Bierschwale, President, Gardiner Chamber of Commerce.

This complex cross-boundary project was awarded \$10.27 million of Montana’s Federal Lands Access Program Funds in 2013 and Park County and Yellowstone National Park are collaborating to manage the work and share responsibility for the 13.42% match. The work is intended to improve circulation, parking, and safety for locals and visitors, and highlight Gardiner’s history while preserving the town’s character. The Gardiner Chamber of Commerce and Greater Gardiner Community Council are working on integrated efforts to provide a welcome center with public restrooms and to construct a building that evokes the original depot to serve as a multi-function modern library. “Gardiner is an extraordinary example of people dedicated to a dynamic cause to create a viable and sustainable community”, said Meagan Lannan, Manager, Livingston Job Service Workforce Center.

On August 25, 2016, the ambitious goal is to celebrate this collaboration and the centennial of the National Park Service in this gateway to Yellowstone and Montana. Community volunteers have invested thousands of hours working with agency partners to stay on track. Save the date! 🌟

UI eServices Right on Track

For the past nine months, members of the Department of Labor and Industry's Unemployment Insurance Division and our vendor, Fast Enterprises, have been working hard on our new UI tax computer system.

BY KEITH LAVENDER, IT Project Manager, Montana Department of Labor & Industry

STAARS, the Status, Tax Accounting, Audit & Rating System. The work continues to progress on schedule, and we're targeting late February of 2014 to move the new system into our production environment. Our existing system will be retired at that time, along with our current public Internet systems, WOW and UI4Employers, which are being replaced by the new public Internet system, UI eServices for Employers.

Since October, front-line employees of the Unemployment Insurance Division (UID) have been going to the STAARS project site to participate in testing the new system. All areas of the system have undergone or will undergo extensive testing by our staff. Most of the testing that is going on now is being done by members of UID who have not been

actively involved in the project up until now. "This brings new sets of eyes to the process, providing a fresh perspective to the system and the way it operates", said Unemployment Insurance Administrator Roy Mulvaney. "We are also testing the public UI eService for Employers website."

In addition, we have held one of two "usability testing" sessions with members of the public to find out how they react to the new website and to find ways to possibly make it even better. "I just wanted to say thank you for giving the end user a chance to provide input. I think it is key to get people using it rather than making it difficult. It was nice to see something pre-production/live so any changes or improvements could be made," said Theresia LeSueur, Montana Schools Un-

employment Insurance Program.

Testing of the new system is approximately two-thirds complete. The results of that testing have thus far been very good. The team has more than 2,500 test cases. Of those that have been completed to date, the overwhelming majority have passed without a problem.

The new eServices will allow employers to:

- ▶ View and make changes to UI account information and demographics
- ▶ File and amend quarterly UI-5 reports (including file attachments and bulk filing)
- ▶ Make payments via ACH debit and Credit Card and set up payment plans
- ▶ View and print UI forms, letters and notices
- ▶ View account history for the current and previous years
- ▶ Communicate securely with UI over the web, and so much more!

The system is still on track to "go live" near the end of February 2014. Watch for announcements on our current websites (WOW and UI4Employers) indicating when the old systems will be turned off and the new system turned on. You can also find information about the new system, including e-filing and payment options, and changes to forms on our website, <http://dli.mt.gov/ui-eservices/>.



Department of Labor and Industry employees testing the new Unemployment Insurance tax computer system

A Star Trek Enterprise ship is shown in space, flying towards the viewer. A large, glowing orange light is visible on the ship's hull. In the background, the Earth and the Moon are visible. A white banner with the text "NOW HIRING" is attached to the ship's hull.

NOW HIRING

Employment: The Ultimate Frontier

These are the efforts of UI claimants everywhere. Their ongoing mission: to explore new job opportunities, to seek out new work and new employers, to boldly be hired and work harder than ever before.

BY JJ COGGESHALL, Operation Research Analyst, UI Division

Like the seemingly endless mission of the Star Trek crew, all unemployment insurance claimants must seek work while claiming benefits. To insure that claimants are meeting the program requirements, the Montana Unemployment Insurance Division (UID) must verify the work search efforts of its claimants. How is that done?

- ▶ Claimants must provide information showing at least one work search contact each week they file for benefits.
- ▶ UID contacts employers to verify the claimant's work search information provided.
- ▶ If unable to verify, either by not being able to contact the business or the business cannot confirm the claimant's application, UI must make further inquiries with the claimant and create an issue to potentially recoup the claimant's benefits for that week.

For example, let's say Scotty, before he was on the Enterprise, was a brilliant but struggling engineer who had been laid off

from his job at the Dilithium crystal mine and was drawing unemployment insurance from the United Federation of Planets (The Federation). Each week he tells the computer his work search efforts when he applies for benefits. The Federation, as part of its requirements, needs to verify the information he reports concerning where and when he applied for work across a wide variety of businesses on various planets. If the businesses he applied to remember him as the guy who claimed to be the expert on beaming people up on the Transporter when he came in and/or have record of his application, benefits can be kept by him for that week. If The Federation cannot reach the business, most often by inter-galactic verbal communication, he will be asked to provide additional information concerning where he applied and may be required to pay back those benefits if he cannot provide more evidence.

These things create inefficiency and extra work for The Federation in performing its duties and causes anxiety for Scotty wondering if he will have to payback his benefits. With-

out UI benefits, Scotty may not end up on the Enterprise, thus leaving the fate of the ship and crew in the hands a less experienced Chief Engineer who is unable to give Captain Kirk more power to the shields when desperately needed.

Though this example is light years ahead of reality, it means that UID is asking you, the business owner, to be prepared to answer questions concerning applicants that have approached your business looking for work.

- ▶ Retain applications from job seekers and information on your businesses job openings.
- ▶ Be able to access that information quickly and easily.
- ▶ Respond promptly to any work search verification, most often by phone, from UI.

The benefits of work search verification to both your business and UID are:

- ▶ Helps to prevent or minimize UI tax increases.
- ▶ UI benefits go only to those who truly qualify.
- ▶ Better and proper use of money your business pays to UI through greater program efficiency.

Improper payment of benefits is a serious problem that has a financial impact on individual employers and can result in higher UI tax rates to all employers. Please partner with Montana UI to work together in making the program efficient, properly paying benefits, and keeping UI contributions low. Live long and prosper!

Raising Awareness

Montana's business climate is being hurt by too many injuries in the workplace, and the problem is widespread, affecting almost every industry in all parts of the state. Creating safer workplaces would result in a multitude of benefits, including reduced workers' compensation premium.

BY FRED MILLER, Montana Department of Labor & Industry Safety & Health Bureau

The Montana Department of Labor & Industry's Safety & Health Bureau (MT SHB) is addressing this issue by raising awareness of Montana's poor safety record, by promoting effective safety programs, and by providing free safety training.

Here are five strategic steps from the MT SHB to help business owners create a safer workplace:

1. Workers are less likely to be injured when the things that can hurt them are recognized early and addressed. On-site safety assessments by the MT SHB help identify, eliminate or control existing and potential safety hazards. An effective assessment will also strengthen a worksite safety program and assist in the application process for OSHA's Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP).

For more information or to request a free safety assessment go to montanasafety.com or call 406.444.6401. There are no fees charged, nor are penalties levied.

2. Safety becomes more viable when minimum standards are published and handed to employees. A written safety plan shows you're serious about safety and now you expect everyone to abide by established procedures and standards. Besides that, it's the law (Montana Code Annotated 39-71-1501).

The MT SHB provides free written safety plans, customized for individual businesses, through an online Safety Writer program. These plans are designed to meet the provisions of the Montana Safety Culture Act and comply with OSHA standards.

Go to www.montanasafety.com for more information, or send an e-mail to DLI Safety Specialist Fred Miller, fmiller@mt.gov, for a step-by-step guide to using the program.

3. Budgeting for safety training can be

challenging, and that's why the MT SHB offers free top-notch safety training at SafetyFestMT. Classes cover a variety of topics, from creating a safety culture to OSHA-authorized training on confined spaces, fall protection and much more. Go to www.safetyfestmt.com to register, or for more information. Upcoming events include:

- Missoula: March 24-28, 2014
- Miles City: May 20-22, 2014
- Havre: August 12-14, 2014

4. There's no need to re-invent the wheel. You can learn from others at community safety groups (in Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Great Falls, Hamilton, Helena, Kalispell, and Missoula), where the MT SHB provides training for safety professionals and business owners. These are informal groups dedicated to increasing the knowledge and awareness of a strong safety culture in Montana workplaces. Go to www.meetings.montanasafety.com for more information.

5. Every employer is required to obey applicable OSHA regulations for workplace safety. Penalties can be assessed by OSHA for non-compliance. The MT SHB provides OSHA 10-hour construction and general industry classes to help familiarize business owners with OSHA regulations & how they can be used to create safer workplaces. Classes are customized to meet specific needs following an on-site hazard assessment. Send an e-mail to Dave at ddefer@mt.gov for more information on free OSHA classes.

Any of these services can be requested online at montanasafety.com, or by calling the MT Safety & Health Bureau at 406.444.6401.

Taken together, these measures will help cultivate safety excellence in our workplaces.

By working together, we can create a safer Montana! 🌟



HAZWOPER students prepare for a hands-on exercise at SafetyFestMT held in Billings.





because an employee has complained. Don't just wait. Document what you find. Follow your policies. Adhere to a consistent practice of following up on problems. If you apply discipline, document your actions.

■ **Employees with disabilities or medical issues affecting their work require your attention.** Medical issues often qualify an employee for protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act. When an employee raises medical concerns in the context of employee work performance, ask simply, "What can I do to help you be successful here?" Good faith interaction is your obligation, as well as the employee's, and good faith will get you on the path to an effective accommodation.

In raising medical issues in the context of work, the employee need not voice any "magic words," or fill out a form to initiate the process. Focus first on what the employee is requesting. Accommodation needs to be effective, but it doesn't necessarily need to be exactly what the employee requests.

Medical concerns don't permit you to delve into an employee's personal information, except that information necessary to determine if reasonable accommodation can be made for an impairment that's affecting performance of an essential job duty. JAN - the Job Accommodations Network - is a very helpful resource; just go to www.askjan.org to find the information you need.

■ **Pregnant employees and those recovering from pregnancy must be provided reasonable maternity leave, and reinstated to their previous job or an equivalent position.** Best practice entails allowing maternity leave based on the advice of the employee's medical provider. You may have to get someone to fill in while the employee is gone, even if it's inconvenient. Probationary employees

have this same protection. Simply providing 12 weeks leave under the FMLA, or six or eight weeks under policy, may not be enough to meet your obligation under Montana law.

The difference between a good employer and a bad employer is not that good employers don't have discrimination complaints, but that good employers understand their rights and responsibilities. ☼

Know Your Rights and Responsibilities as an Employer

Learning from others is an element of success in all manners of endeavor.

BY DENNIS UNSWORTH, Investigator, Department of Labor & Industry Montana Human Rights Bureau

Consider the following, gleaned from employers who've successfully defended their past actions under the anti-discrimination laws that apply to all Montana businesses.

■ **Beware, retaliation.** An employee who complains of what he or she reasonably believes is illegal discrimination, or participates as a witness, regardless of the outcome, is engaging in "protected activity." Retaliation over this activity is now among the top categories of employee complaints filed and investigated under Montana and federal law. Any action by an employer that would tend to dissuade someone from such action provides basis for a complaint—and a complaint will divert your business' time and resources.

Best practice? Don't do it. The law protects those who choose to speak up. Make sure your people all receive regular anti-discrimination training, and make sure your decision-making staff take it seriously.

If a discrimination complaint has been filed, keep it "business as usual," so long as you're confident your policies and practices are on the right track. If you're not confident, get some help from those who know and can be trusted—it's probably not too late. Model policies are available simply by contacting the Human Rights Bureau.

If performance problems do arise, don't overlook them just



Apprenticeship: Improving Your Bottom Line

Be honest: you thought apprenticeship training died out with the turn of the century, and I don't mean 1999! But it's still going strong, and there's a good reason.

BY **DARRELL HOLZER**, State Director, Montana Department of Labor & Industry Apprenticeship & Training Program

Apprenticeship is alive and kicking in the 21st century because it's still one of the best developed training models for teaching YOUR business' skills to a new generation of workers. If your business has turnover, or can't find the right skill set in prospective employees, then let's talk apprenticeship!

Turnover is a business issue that at some point affects us all. Training is expensive, costing your business thousands to bring new hires up to speed. But what if you hire an apprentice; a high school junior or senior, or college freshman? They work for you 10 hours a week during the school year and full time during the summer. You start training right now on all aspects of your business, at a reduced cost because apprentices work on a progressive wage scale. When apprentices know less, they get paid less. When they know more and are adding to your bottom line, you pay them more.

They're committed to you, and your business. You'll know they have the skills they need to be an asset to your business, because you are teaching them exactly what you need them to know while they are simultaneously taking college courses. When they come on-board full-time, they are already productive workers. It's a win-win situation—and how many of those do you find today?

Every business has a unique skill set needed to succeed and grow. No education, no matter how complete or inclusive, can teach someone the ins and outs of your business. But you can. Apprenticeship provides a bridge between education and real life job skills; skills only learned in the day in, day out business routine. You learn a person's employability skills by seeing them in action every day,

allowing you to test drive an employee. Do they have what it takes to survive in your world? Find out now, when it won't cost you as much. Or hire an unknown graduate and hope it turns out OK. What makes more sense for your bottom line- test driven or blind hire? For most business owners, it's an easy answer.

Apprenticeship only thrives when businesses thrive. It's used to train highly technical, specific business and occupational skills in the best and oldest way known; on the job. So when you're planning that next hire, go with a proven winner. Hire an apprentice and pay on a progressive wage schedule while they learn.

Got your attention? Then take five minutes and explore www.apprenticeship.mt.gov to learn what apprenticeship can offer your business. And contact our program—we'll help you figure out how apprenticeship can build your business and our Montana workforce. 🌟

APPRENTICESHIP.MT.GOV





Strategic Safety

BY FRED MILLER, Safety Specialist, DLI Safety & Health Bureau

“Make it real for the workers by showing them the big picture.”

“Educate workers to get their buy-in.”

“The best safety program involves everyone.”

“Create a culture of caring, encourage people to help one another.”

These were recurring themes during the first-ever Strategic Safety for Public Entities, held during SafetyFestMT: Helena 2013.

Strategic Safety for Public Entities aims to improve worker safety through the sharing of knowledge and resources. Its goals were to:

- ▶ Have public entities set the standard for workplace safety by implementing safety management principles, thus seeing safety as an integral part of daily operations;
- ▶ Boost operational excellence by reducing work-related injuries;
- ▶ Fully utilize the Montana Safety Culture Act.

Motivation for the class comes from the DLI Safety & Health Bureau, which is raising awareness of how frequently Montana workers are injured at work, and how much those injuries are costing the state's economy.

The goal was to capture best practices being used by public entities to set an exam-

ple how to establish excellent safety cultures. If these agencies pooled resources to create synergy, safety expertise would increase and help stem Montana's injury epidemic.

This class explained how implementing safety boosts operational excellence by reducing work-related injuries and producing greater quality services. It also established the connection between safety and lower injury rates, and helped develop a safety culture by utilizing the Montana Safety Culture Act.

The result? Safer workplaces, fewer injuries, lower work comp factors and healthier employees.

The class was well received. “This is the best class I've attended in quite a while,” said one participant. “The information and speakers were great!” said another.

Classes were taught by specialists from

each of the founding members:

- MT University System: Mike Panisko.
- MT Municipal Interlocal Authority: Thomas Danenhower, John Cummings.
- MT Association of Counties: Emelia McEwen, Jim Muskovich.
- MT DLI, Safety & Health Bureau: Bryan Page, Tammy Lynn, Fred Miller.
- MT Worker's Comp Management Bureau: Stephanie Grover, Joe Hamilton.

Top take-aways from the class included:

- ▶ Safety self-inspections in each department need to be done on an annual basis.
- ▶ “It's not about the money; it's about the employee going home safe. But the savings in the back end are going to be considerable.”
- ▶ “Critical thinking is almost a lost art in today's work place.”
- ▶ MT workplace injury rates are higher than the national average in all categories. If injury rates were reduced to national average, it would save \$145 million.
- ▶ In Montana, it takes 31 days longer than the national average for an injured worker to return to work.
- ▶ A strong Safety Committee is the most critical component in establishing an effective safety culture.
- ▶ How you treat the injured worker at beginning sets the tone for the rest of the process.

The next class is scheduled for SafetyFestMT: Missoula 2014, which will be March 24 & 25 at the Hilton Garden Inn. Check www.safetyfestmt.com for more details. 🌟

SAFETYFESTMT.COM

Upcoming events

SafetyFestMT

Free Safety Training Opportunities in Montana: We're taking SafetyFestMT on the road, so that Montanans from east to west, north to south can attend. Sessions are free to any Montana worker and cover a variety of safety topics—from broad issues like creating a culture of safety in your company to OSHA-Authorized training on confined spaces, fall protection and much, much more.

We encourage you, whether you work in the trades, on a farm or at the office, to attend an upcoming event in your area.

March 24-28	Missoula	Hilton Garden Inn
May 20-22,	Miles City	TBA
August 12-14	Havre	TBA

SafetyFestMT provides free workplace safety training and networking opportunities to any Montana worker or business. If you have questions, need information, or are curious about exhibitor opportunities at any of our upcoming events, please contact **Casey Kyler-West** at (406) 444-5267 or ckylwest@mt.gov.

Assistance for Business Clinics (ABC)

Each year the Montana Department of Labor and Industry in partnership with other state agencies, local Chambers of Commerce, Job Service Employee Committees (JSEC), and Montana State University host Assistance for Business Clinics across the state.

For more information, visit <http://dli.mt.gov/abc/clinic.asp>

April 17	Livingston	Best Western Yellowstone
April 24	Kalispell	Hilton Garden Inn
April 30	Helena	Red Lion
May 7	Glasgow	Glasgow Elks Club
May 8	Sidney	Sidney Elks Lodge
May 9	Miles City	Miles Community College Rm. 106
May 22	Bozeman	Best Western Plus GranTree
May 30	Great Falls	Holiday Inn
June 4	Missoula	Ruby's Inn & Convention Center
June 12	Havre	MSU Northern-Applied Tech Bldg.
June 19	Billings	MSU Downtown Campus
September 11	Polson	Ninepipes Lodge (Charlo)
September 19	Lewistown	Yogo Inn
September 25	Butte	La Quinta Inn & Suites
October 2	Hamilton	Bitterroot River Inn



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Main Street Memory



Interior view of the Arro Confectionary store, circa 1918, located in the Fergus County Realty building (built 1914) at 521 W. Main, Lewistown, Montana. Glass cases full of candy line the left side. Photo from the Montana Memory Project.