

SPRING 2010

Main Street

M O N T A N A

8 NATIVE WORDS, NATIVE WARRIORS

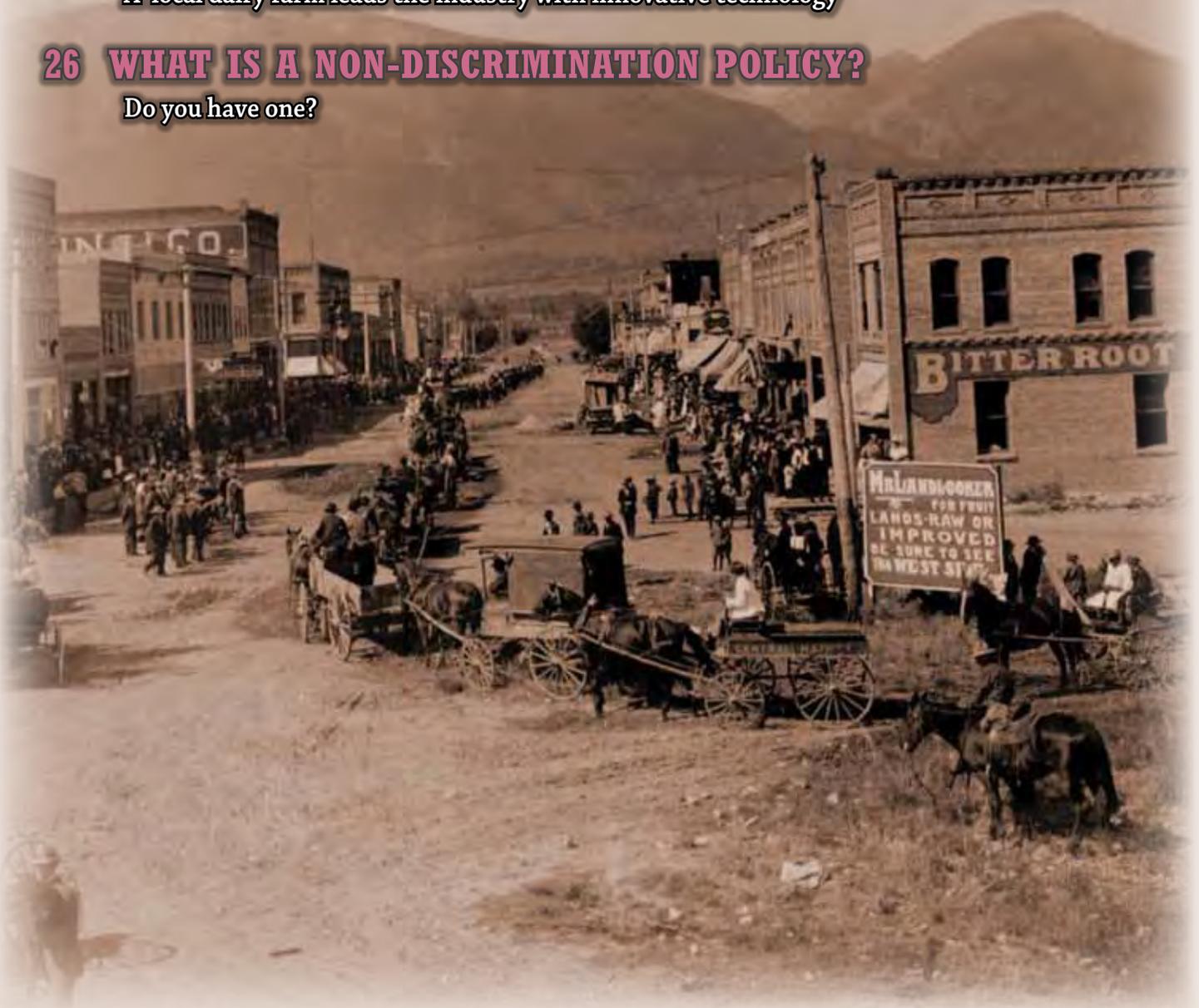
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Ravalli Hotel 1907, Courtesy Montana Historical Society

Bordered by the Sapphire Mountains on the east and the Bitterroot Mountains on the west, Ravalli County was once home to the Bitterroot Salish Tribe. The Lewis and Clark Expedition noted the friendly nature of the tribe when they traveled through the area in 1805. Chief Joseph and his Wallowa band of Nez Perce passed through on their way to Canada in 1877. The Catholic Church took an interest in the valley and decided to create a mission which led to the founding of Stevensville in 1841. Fifty-two years later, on March 3, 1893, the Montana Legislature created Ravalli County, naming it after the Italian Jesuit priest Antony Ravalli, who came to the valley in 1845.

In the early days agriculture and timber were the main contributors to the county's economy. Copper King Marcus Daly came to the Bitterroot Valley in search of timber for his copper mines in Butte and Anaconda. He built a mill to process the timber and soon after founded Hamilton in 1894. The new town was named after his employee James Hamilton, who plotted the town along the Northern Pacific Railway.

The "Apple Boom" nearly doubled the valley's population from 1907 to 1911. Thousands of farmers, enticed by the promise of fertile land and good climate, came to the valley to grow fruit trees. But by 1915 the easily accessible timber was harvested, and by 1917 the "Apple Boom" went bust. It wasn't until 1927, when the Rocky Mountain Laboratory was established, that the local economy stabilized.

The Bitterroot Valley attracts thousands of visitors each year. Those who come to the area have access to the rugged peaks of the mountains and enjoy hiking, fishing, hunting and other outdoor activities, making tourism a vital part of the county's economy.

In this issue of **Main Street Montana**, our focus is on alternative energy development in Montana and the important roles these alternative fuels play in both the state and nation's economy. Biofuels are already playing a key role, with the recent flight of an F-18 fueled by camelina grown in Montana. Biomass, solar power and other alternative energy sources are also having a major impact on our economy.

This issue of **Main Street Montana** also focuses businesses who call Ravalli County home. We'll look at why giving back to the local and global community is so important to these businesses and how volunteering can be the perfect training ground for those just starting out in their careers. We'll also tell you about some of the programs benefiting Montana's small businesses.

Keith Kelly, Commissioner
Department of Labor & Industry



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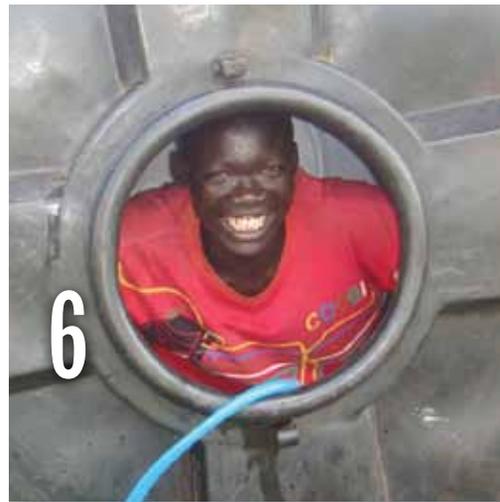
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The 2010 Spring edition of Main Street Montana is brought to you by the Montana Department of Labor & Industry.



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Hamilton's Main Street, 1908 Courtesy Ravalli County Museum

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Travel Montana, Courtesy of Donnie Sexton



Department of Labor and Industry, 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, labor force statistics, and unemployment at www.ourfactsyourfuture.org.



Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Forestry Division ensures the sustainability of Montana's forests, rural lands and communities through cooperative wildland fire protection, sound forest management practices, and by promoting a viable forest-based economy.



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

Department of Commerce, Main Street Montana Program is an approach to downtown revitalization, set within a context of historic preservation that has been used in thousands of rural and urban communities across the country since 1980.

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

Department of Public Health and Human Services, Healthy Montana Kids Program provides health coverage to eligible Montana children and teenagers up to the age of 19.

Governor's Office of Community Service works with the Governor-appointed Montana Commission on Community Service to promote service and volunteerism in Montana.



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

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

Bitterroot Job Service Office is the local representative of the Montana Department of Labor and Industry. It focuses on developing and maintaining a high quality workforce system for Ravalli County by providing services to demand-driven businesses and job seekers, government officials and entities, the public and its own employees.



Department of Labor and Industry, Apprenticeship Bureau assists in setting up structured yet flexible training programs recognized by federal and industry standards designed to meet the specific needs of Montana employers through on-the-job training (OJT) and related classroom instruction.



RAVALLI COUNTY IS BIOENERGY COUNTRY

Author: Chantel McCormick

Energy production from biomass is an important component of Governor Brian Schweitzer's energy policy.

This kind of energy development will create new markets for agricultural and forest products and reduce our state and nation's dependence on imported oil, while attracting investment and creating jobs throughout Montana.

Biomass is organic material that comes primarily from plants. It contains stored energy that plants get from the sun through photosynthesis. Biomass is a renewable energy source that can be produced from crops, garbage, manure and wood. Biomass fueled power plants release energy stored in organic material that is used to produce electricity. It is cleaner burning than fossil fuels and it doesn't produce pollutants such as sulfur. The carbon dioxide emitted from burning biomass is nearly the same amount that was captured by the plant during photosynthesis. Recently, we've heard a lot about opportunities to utilize forest waste for energy production. Woody biomass is a renewable, natural resource used for direct heating and electricity generation. There are many benefits of using woody biomass for energy production including: CO2 neutrality, simple processing, low levels of pollution, and enhancing local economic development.

The 2007 legislature recognized the importance of biomass to Montana's energy future and created the Biomass Feasibility Study Grant through the Department of Commerce. Montana companies received \$425,000 to gain a better understanding of our opportunities in western Montana to develop biomass energy production

facilities. The results of the studies are expected to be released in May.

In addition to wood and grain bioenergy opportunities, algae is another promising sustainable energy solution. Ravalli County is home to AlgEvolv, a company founded in 2007 with a vision to "develop algae based solutions for some of today's biggest challenges: water, energy production, and greenhouse gas emissions." Today, the company is working on projects throughout the western U.S. – including Montana- to clean up polluted water, use municipal waste as fuel for energy processes, sequester CO2 using algae, and make fertilizer, feed, nutritive supplements, bio-plastic, and bio-fuels.

The opportunities for Montana energy development are as endless as our big sky. In Western Montana, where wind and coal are not abundant, we look to bioenergy as an important part of our diverse energy portfolio. We are excited about the great opportunities that lie before us and hope to realize our goal of harvesting our timber waste for energy. It's important for Montana and it is a priority of the Schweitzer administration.

If you have any ideas, comments, or questions on the energy future of Montana, please don't hesitate to call me at 406-841-2030 or email me at cmccormick@mt.gov.



Chantel McCormick
Senior Energy Development Specialist
Montana Department of Commerce



Biomass Forest Slash, Courtesy Department of Commerce Energy Promotion and Development Division



Collecting Biomass, Courtesy Department of Commerce Energy Promotion and Development Division

THE POWER OF THE SUN

Author: Casey Kyler-West

As with other renewable energy resources, solar energy has grown in popularity in recent years; however, it isn't a recent idea. Leonardo da Vinci predicted solar industrialization as far back as 1447 and Edward Becquerel created the first solar electric cell in 1839. In the beginning, most of the people who used solar energy as a resource lived way off the grid and solar was their only option. That trend has changed and one Montana company is helping people all over the U.S. and the world harness the power of the sun. "People are looking for ways to cut power bills in an effort to cut back and conserve energy. They're also looking for tax breaks, and installing a solar system allows them to take those tax breaks," says Sunelco President Tom Bishop.



Local residents and the installation crew test solar-powered water pump near Masindi (Kigumba)Uganda, courtesy Tom Osborne

Sunelco, an acronym for "Sun Electric Company", was founded in 1985 in Darby, Montana, to provide education and equipment for solar customers in the Bitterroot Valley. In 2005 Sunelco relocated to its present facility in Victor, Montana Along with its planning guide and product catalogue, Sunelco provides complete design and technical assistance to its clients. This year the company is celebrating its silver anniversary by continuing to serve customers all over the world.

Though Sunelco has been impacted by the downturn in the economy with the decline in new construction, business has remained steady with reconstruction projects and the need for solar powered water pumps on farms and ranches and in foreign countries. Sunelco has



Local residents use solar-powered pump for the first time in the field, courtesy Tom Osborne



A local takes the first drink from the solar-powered water pump near Masindi, (Kigumba)Uganda, courtesy Tom Osborne

designed several water pump systems for the African Corridor and several island countries, giving the local residents access to clean water for both themselves and their animals. . The company also hopes to contribute expertise and equipment for solar power systems to community centers in Haiti.

Despite solar energy's rise in popularity, Bishop doesn't believe it's a cure all for the nation's power ills. "I still see solar being a user specific product; like you might see apartment complexes, schools, or factories with the entire roof covered in solar panels. The power generated will be for that individual use, not necessarily for the community at large."



Local residents install a solar-powered water pump at a refugee settlement farm near Masindi (Kigumba)Uganda, courtesy Tom Osborne

Bishop does believe that each solar system helps lessen the demand on the grid and ultimately could curb the need for more power plants. "We don't need more power plants. We need to make people more aware of energy efficiency; if we all reduced our usage by 50% we would decrease our need for new power plants for the next 30 years."

As technology changes and the solar power evolves, new jobs will also be created. The College of Technology at the University of Montana is currently offering a two year program giving students the skills they need to enter the alternative energy field. Sunelco has an internship program with the C.O.T. and currently has one intern. "There's a shortage of qualified service persons, and we want to make sure students have an opportunity to get job specific training in the industry," said Bishop.

FIND YOUR VOICE

Author: Casey Kyler-West

Find your voice, three simple words that are changing the lives of high school students in Ravalli County. The MAPS Media Institute (formerly MAPS™: Media Arts in the Public Schools) is teaching teens how to find their voice as they learn how to communicate through electronic media.

The program is the brainchild of Hollywood producer/writer/director Peter Rosten, who left the glitz and glamour of Tinseltown to retire at age 52 in Darby. After a couple of years of taking it easy, Rosten grew restless and wanted to find a way to give back to the Bitterroot. "I thought to myself, this community has been really good to me – what can I do in return, especially for kids?" said Rosten. That was how MAPS was born.

Budget restraints made it difficult for the schools to entertain the idea of including the program in their curriculum until Rosten said he would find the money himself. The Office of Public Instruction also supported Rosten's idea and provided the certification needed to teach in Montana's schools. "Working with these high school students is fantastic on many levels. The truth is, a handful will end up in the movie business...I mean, how many of our kids end up in the NBA? But 99% of employers uniformly state that communication is an underdeveloped skill in many of their new hires. So of all the things we teach, it's communication; can you write, can you create a message, can you tell a story that touches someone's heart?" said Rosten.

All of the teachers and guest lecturers who work with the students are professionals in their field, so the students are getting firsthand knowledge of the industry. "It looks really good on a resume that you're doing college level courses while you're still in high school," said MAPS student Mika Virtaneva.

Since its beginning in 2004, the program has grown and students aren't just working on class projects. They have created commercials that have aired nationally for organizations like the Centers for Disease Control and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. They've also produced commercials for the Ravalli County DUI Task Force, Montana Student



Assistance Foundation, and Montana Tobacco Prevention Program, and have recently been hired by Ravalli County Health Department. The students do get paid for their work, which Rosten believes can be an added incentive; "Creating jobs in Montana is a good thing, and although our team is 14 – 18 years old, we pay them well."

Out of the 200 students who have gone through the program, only four have dropped out of high school. Rosten attributes that to a longstanding MAPS policy of working with students so they can succeed in everything they do. "If a student is failing a class, we talk to them and encourage them in very strong terms that failure is not acceptable...in MAPS and in life."

As budget restraints force schools to cut programs including the arts, students who aren't athletes often lose the ability to express themselves. "This space is a safe place for people to be who they are and be respected for who they are and I think teaching that to kids and adults alike is important," said documentary film student Erin Belmont.

MAPS is currently funded by a combination of grants and fees generated by client fees. In 2009, the 21st Century Learning Centers awarded the program a five year commitment which pays for approximately 60% of the program's budget. Over time, Rosten believes the program will eventually be self-sustaining through its professional services business and his students can continue to find their voice long after their high school days are done.



CODE TALKERS

Author: Casey Kyler-West

It has been said that the pen is mightier than the sword; an adage that American Indian soldiers proved true during World War I and World War II. These soldiers were asked to use words from their traditional tribal language as weapons in secret battle communications that America's enemies could not decipher.

Today these soldiers are being recognized in the traveling Smithsonian exhibit "Native Words, Native Warriors", created by Montanan George Horse Capture. The Montana Historical Society, in cooperation with the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs, is taking the special exhibit to all seven Montana Reservations to recognize the courage and sacrifice of those who served and continue to serve on the battlefields of today. "It is a meaningful occasion for the Society to help host an event that honors the servicemen and women from Montana's seven reservations and twelve tribes," Society director Richard Sims said. "Their warrior tradition is manifested in all of the Montanans serving in the armed forces today."

The exhibit centers on Native American code talkers who used their native languages to relay vital information on the battlefield. Although the Navajo code talkers of WWII have gotten the most attention, the exhibit shows that Native Americans were first used as battlefield communicators in WWI. Marines and GIs from the Assiniboine, Sioux, Navajo, Hope, Kiowa, Comanche, Choctaw, Cherokee, Meskwaki, Creek, Chippewa, Cree, Sac and Fox, Oneida, Menominee, and Seminole nations all served as code talkers. "It is unremittingly ironic that the very weapon needed by U.S. forces was the very weapon the U.S. government had been trying to dismantle for decades – American Indian languages," Sims said.

American Indians who call Montana home have always been at the top per capita nationwide in enlisting in the various branches of the U.S. Military. Like all code talkers, these men endured dangerous battles during some of the most critical campaigns. Their calm under fire as they relayed messages showed their strength and honor and as a result, thousands of American and Allies' lives were saved. The Montana Historical Society is honoring their courage and has added to the exhibit to tell their story. "The State of Montana is



Native Americans and non-Native Americans served side by side as brothers in WWII, photo by Ella Mad Plume Yellow Wolfe courtesy Montana Historical society.

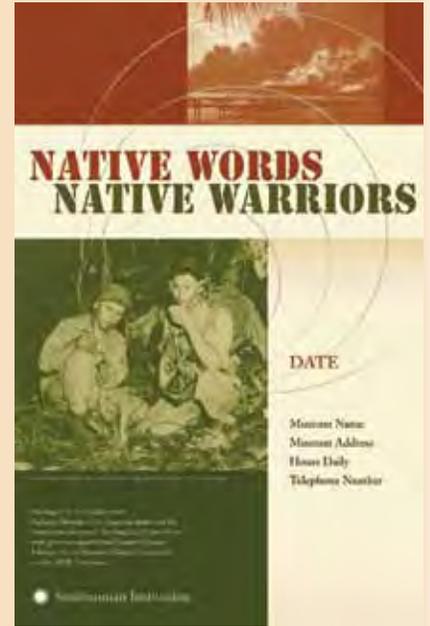
honored to collaborate with the Smithsonian in paying homage to Native Warriors, with special recognition of the vital role native code talkers played in the protection of our country," said Jennifer Perez Cole, an Assiniboine and the director of the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs. "As the Director of Indian Affairs for Montana and as the daughter of a Vietnam War veteran and the granddaughter of a World War II veteran who survived the Bataan Death March,

this exhibit is very special to me and to all the Native warriors of Montana and their families. I welcome and encourage all veterans, their families and communities, to visit this important exhibit as it travels Montana."

Wal-Mart contributed \$8,000 that will be divided equally among Montana reservations. The Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation also contributed. This will allow local tribal leaders and veterans to use their individual traditions to honor veterans. Private individuals and groups have also donated money to offset the cost of the exhibit. If you wish to contribute, contact the Society at 406-444-5485.

Watch for local publicity for the exhibit dates at venues on reservations across the state over the next year. All exhibits will be open to the public.

To learn more about the "Native Words, Native Warriors" exhibit log onto <http://www.nmai.si.edu/education/codetalkers/>.



Montanan Barney Old Coyote Jr. receives a commendation for sinking a German submarine during WWII.

RAVALLI ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER

Author: Patti Furness, Bitterroot Job Service

The Ravalli Entrepreneurship Center (REC) is the result of collaboration between economic development, employment and education. The 10,000-square-foot facility north of Hamilton on old Corvallis road, was designed by local architect Lee Kierig and sits on four acres of land donated by the Ravalli County Council on Aging. The opening of the \$3.4 million center marks the end of a multi-year effort to bring a small business incubator to Ravalli County with the goal of helping businesses grow, hire employees and move out of the building to their own location once they're self-sustaining.

But the Ravalli Entrepreneurship Center is more than a landlord for entrepreneurial tenants; it also houses the Ravalli County Economic Development Authority (RCEDA), the Bitterroot College Program of the University of Montana and the Bitterroot Job Service Workforce Center. "The relationships being formed between REC business, economic development, workforce and education and the community are something that we knew would happen but it is still amazing to be part of the spontaneous problem solving and brainstorming that occurs," said RCEDA Executive Director Julie Foster.

Twelve people have successfully completed the first session of the Building Bitterroot Business Classes. The classes include QuickBooks Basics for business, Excel Basics for business, Business Plan I, Business Plan II Financials, Marketing, Obtaining Financing with Traditional and Alternative Options, Business Types and Human Resource's Frequently Asked Questions. "The business classes are a great example of how these elements come together; the class curriculum is a proactive process of providing what the customers (entrepreneurs and business people) want and need," said Foster.

The Job Service has staff available to assist business and job seekers alike with job matching, employment and training, workshops, resource materials, and veteran services. In addition, the Bitterroot Job Service also has a resource room with Internet access as well as access to a fax, and public use copy machine. A conference room is available for employee orientations, training sessions or meetings.

The Bitterroot College program is completing its first semester in the Center with 13 for-credit classes serving the local student body of more than 70 students. New students are applying daily and seven courses are scheduled for the summer semester. 19 courses are slated for the Fall 2010 semester.

Though its doors have only been open for seven months, the Ravalli Entrepreneurship Center is already playing a key role in the County's economy and that role will continue to grow.



Ravalli Entrepreneurship Center



Customers using the Resource Center in the Bitterroot Job Service

SAFETY WRITER PROGRAM



Your employees are a big part of your success, so why not keep them safe? Would you like to pay less in workers' compensation premiums, improve productivity and improve morale? The Safety Writer Program will help you do all of that by helping you create your own safety and health plan.

The Safety Writer Program is a computer based program that allows you to create your own plan and implement a workplace safety philosophy. It will also help you be compliant with the Montana Safety Culture Act of 1993.

The program can be used to develop your plan in two different ways: by using a Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) or North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) or by inputting specific tasks. The program is designed to develop your plan by your SIC or NAICS codes so it is specific to your industry. This allows you to select the program(s) you need. If you don't know your SIC or NAICS, you can use a task search and select all the different tasks you perform.

To schedule an appointment or get assistance with the Safety Writer Program, call 406-444-6401 or visit us at www.montanasafety.com to schedule an on-site consultation.

MONTANA'S AGRO-ENERGY PLAN

Author: Adam de Yong

Four years ago biofuels and bioproducts were poised for major growth in Montana.

The governor was quickly becoming one of the most vocal national proponents of alternative energy development and the vast potential Montana held. Interested companies were in the process of, or on the verge of developing major energy projects across the state. Then the economy collapsed and with it the financing for many of the major projects planned, but not yet underway. Unemployment rose across the state as government leaders discussed the growing concern about a state budget deficit.



Bio Energy Testing Innovation Center, Havre MT

Today the economy is stabilizing and it appears a budget deficit has been avoided. The companies that were actively interested in energy development in the state never left. They just took shelter from the financial storm, confident that the growing demand for clean energy would not be forgotten. After patiently waiting out the financial storm these companies are again building momentum and financing for energy development in the state, much of which has been made possible by the continuation of projects during the economic downturn, most notably transmission line development.

Throughout this turbulent time Montana has been working to provide its citizens with training and education needed to become gainfully employed in a new emerging industry that many hope will bring economic vitality back to the rural communities in central and eastern Montana. Montana's Agro-Energy Plan (MAP) was implemented in a time of endless opportunity for business growth within the industry and then endured a turbulent business climate, but due to the innovative and reactive nature of the program it remained successful. One of the most critical successes of the program is the connections built through collaboration and cooperation between economic development, education, and the workforce system.

A Montana Job Service manager jokingly referred to collaboration as The Miracle of the Pies: "As the pies shrink, everybody brings their pies to the table. When they do, they find there's an extra pie that no one noticed before."

"The Montana Agro-Energy Program (MAP) lets us go beyond the tried and true things to ask what is really working and what is not. This is a rural frontier area. We need to be creative, and in fact we have been for a long time. MAP gives us an opportunity to honor that creative tradition. The whole concept is innovative. First, the initiative is truly regional. We have seen regional elements in specific projects, but never at this scale. Second, it's flexible, not one-size-fits-all in terms of service delivery and training options. Third, it is many-layered, with training, business development, and university research... So there's much more variety in what can happen." – Montana Job Service regional manager

Relationships have grown at the local level as well as the state level. Respondents in Montana stated that one of the biggest accomplishments of the Montana Agro-Energy Plan is that local Job Service staff members have established relationships with both the tribal colleges and Montana State University, Northern. As one respondent said, "We are now a lifetime partnership."

- Number of individuals who completed workforce training – 3,618
- Number of individuals who attained a degree, certificate, or industry recognized credential – 1,510
- New curriculum developed for the biofuels\bioproducts industry - 101
- Projected number of additional students that will be trained on new curriculum – 1,275
- Number of industry education and outreach sessions – 656
 - Estimated number of participants – 25,432
- Number of new bio-energy jobs created – 472.6
- Average wage - \$17.06\hr
- Number of new business startup or expansions – 67



PRESERVING MAIN STREET

Author: Julie Burk, Montana Department of Commerce



Julie Burk, Main Street Program Coordinator, courtesy Donnie Sexton

What images come to mind when you think about the Main Street in your downtown?

“For some, Main Street conjures up a Norman Rockwell scene of diners, barber shops, and theaters. For others, it conjures up boarded up buildings, graffiti, and blight.

At their best, Main Streets represent the center, the core of our communities. They are the economic engine, the center stage, and the community’s living room. The Main Streets of America are places that matter because they are places where citizens can still come together to work, live, and engage with one another.

In Montana, there is a program dedicated to preserving and strengthening hometown historic business districts and revitalizing the local economy in communities across our state. Modeled after the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s model, the Montana Department of Commerce’s Main Street program provides technical assistance and training, workshops, conferences, and networking opportunities.

As the program observes its fifth anniversary this year, we are assessing how to make our program even more effective, and invite more communities across Montana to come on board.

To this end, we are distributing a survey to gather suggestions from communities across the state to find out what kinds of downtown development and historic preservation services they would like to receive. For example, would your community benefit from design services such as assistance with window displays, merchandising, signage, streetscape planning, parking, or preservation design guidelines? Or would it benefit from promotional assistance, such as branding and image development, special events planning, retail and business promotions, or heritage tourism?

For those seeking an opportunity to learn more about what’s going on in the world of downtown development and historic preservation, one upcoming opportunity is the Montana Downtown Forum, a conference that will offer the most comprehensive information in the state. The conference, co-sponsored by the Montana Department of Commerce and the Missoula Downtown Association, takes place Sept. 15-17, 2010 in Missoula. Topics will include merchandising your business in a down economy, heritage tourism, managing your downtown’s graphic identity, funding for preservation programming, and many others. Keynote speakers for the conference include Kit Kramer, president of the International Downtown Association; Scott Day, principal, Urban Development Services; and Todd Barman, program officer of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Renewal is occurring all over Montana, both in our larger and smaller towns. According to Greg Krueger of the Downtown Billings Association, Inc., the taxable value of downtown doubled during 1998 to 2008. During those 10 years, just over \$10 million tax increment funds leveraged approximately \$50 million in private investment to result in 200 renewal projects, with total investment exceeding \$60 million. These projects included technical assistance grants, façade/sign/awning grants, housing grants, retail rehabilitation grants, new streetscapes, wayfinding signage, and many others.

On a much smaller but no less important scale is Townsend. From 2001 to 2009, Broadwater County Development Corporation’s Storefront Grant Program awarded \$16,717 in 34 grants that helped fund approximately \$702,000 in completed projects. According to BCDC President Ernie Forrey, the grant program has expanded to cover signage, landscaping, and murals because they all add to the curbside appeal of a business.

Healthy, vibrant downtowns help recruit new residents, businesses, and tourists, and help retain the people who already live and work there. If your downtown has room for improvement, you may want to consider how the Montana Department of Commerce’s Main Street program could help. If you would like to take the survey mentioned above, or find out more about the program, please contact Julie Burk at 406/841-2756 or jburk@mt.gov.



Downtown Bigfork, courtesy Travel Montana, Donnie Sexton



Downtown Red Lodge, courtesy Travel Montana, Donnie Sexton



Downtown Livingston, courtesy Travel Montana, Donnie Sexton

THE “CREAM” OF THE CROP

Author: Casey Kyler-West

In 1908 Spencer Huls and his wife Inez settled on the 40 acres northeast of Corvallis. They had no idea that 102 years later, their farm would grow to more than 600 acres with five generations of Huls at the helm. Though the fifth generation is not quite ready to take over, The Huls Brothers Dan, Tim, Bruce, Jeff and their wives are working to give them the opportunity if they want it. “We had the opportunity to carry on and now as we’re moving forward, our kids are going to make the decision themselves about their involvement,” said Tim Huls.

The dairy industry has seen dramatic changes in the last century. Farmers now have technology to produce more milk per animal, due to better animal nutrition, healthcare, and genetics.

The volatility of the milk market has dairy farmers discussing supply management. When the demand for milk goes down, dairy farmers must still produce. The cows have to be milked on a daily basis, and unlike the oil industry, milk cannot sit in



A local resident purchasing Afterburner Boost by the truckload

barrels; that means the farmers don’t have a lot of leverage for bargaining. During this last economic downturn they were paid at historically low levels, lower than Great Depression prices when inflation is factored in. “We have a perishable product that needs to leave the farm in two days. It needs to be processed right away, so we’re not in a position of strength to bargain and that really hurts the dairy owner,” said Huls.

Despite the volatility of the milk market, the Huls are looking toward the future, not only to provide more opportunities for the next generation, but also toward being better neighbors and stewards of the land. “When you’ve been somewhere 100-plus years, the people you do business with become your friends. We look at things long term and it may be bad now, but it’s been bad before and the sun will come up tomorrow,” said Dan Huls.

That’s why in 2007, Huls Dairy became the first Montana dairy with a methane digester. This anaerobic digester converts the approximate 2.5 million gallons of manure produced by the 370 milking cows on a yearly basis into fertilizer. A scraper



Inside the Huls Barn, courtesy Casey Kyler-West

system cleans the cow alleys 12 times a day, feeding a mixing tank where the manure is agitated before it’s pumped into the digester. Once it goes through digestion, the remaining solids are separated, bagged and sold as Afterburner Boost garden and lawn fertilizer. The liquid fraction is captured in the lined pond for application to the dairy farm’s crop and pasture land. The digester also produces electricity for the dairy farm and some homes in the Bitterroot Valley.

Recently Huls Dairy was the Regional Finalist for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce 2010 Dream Big Small Business Award. Out of the more than 70 finalists, Huls was the only agriculturally based business; something that the Huls family would like to see change. “Every family farm is essentially a small business and almost every farm hires someone and turns those dollars in the local economy. But what they contribute individually on a national scale goes unnoticed, despite the agricultural commodities produced by American families being used as a tool on the world stage,” said Dan Huls.

In an effort to educate people about the dairy farm industry and the methane digester, the Huls regularly give tours of the farm and the digester. To learn more about Huls Dairy go to www.hulsdairy.com.



SILICONE VALLEY

Author: Casey Kyler-West



Two employees working on the fabrication of a silicone product

As you drive into Ravalli County you get caught up in the magnificent mountain vistas surrounding the valley.

But did you know that the Bitterroot Valley is not only home to some of Montana's premier outdoor activities, it is also home to roughly 90 manufacturers as well.

The goods manufactured in the valley vary, but what may surprise you is that Specialty Surgery Products (SSP), one of the leading companies in silicone fabrication, is based just south of Victor. Jan Varner, co-founder and CEO of Specialty Surgery Products and its sister company SSP-SiMatrix, left Santa Barbara and moved to the Bitterroot Valley in 1994 with his wife Sherry and founded the company. "We enjoy the quality of life and want to live here as opposed to other metropolitan areas that could be more financially rewarding," said Varner.

Because the company does not have heavy shipping requirements, it can overnight its finished products to most of its customers; larger quantities can shipped out by tractor-trailer.

Between the two companies, SSP and SSP-SiMatrix employ 60 people. Some of the employees such as the engineers have college degrees, while those working in the production may not. Although it is a specialized industry, the production of the silicone surgery products does not require a college degree or special certification. "The type of work we do is fairly specialized; people don't go to school to do what we do. As a consequence, we

can train people if they have the aptitude and interest in working," said Varner.

Unlike other industries, SSP and SSP-SiMatrix have not been hit hard by the recent national recession. "Whether we like it or not people still have needs for medical care, and our business has not been impacted like some," said Varner.

SSP does more than manufacture silicone products, it also designs and develops new products specific to surgeons' needs. An example is the Dermaspan™ Tissue Expander, introduced in 1999. The device is put under healthy skin adjacent to a wound; it's designed to expand the healthy skin over wound to minimize scarring and reduce the need for skin grafts.

SSP-SiMatrix sets itself apart by being one of the few facilities in the country that uses silicone dip casting to create its products. The dip casting process allows SSP-SiMatrix to be more flexible in meeting physicians' needs while leading the way in developing new prototypes and techniques for treatment. "Dip casting is our niche; very few companies do what we do. As a result, we are able to keep our base here and stay competitive," said Varner.

With customers from all over the world demanding their products, there's no question that Specialty Surgery Products and its sister company SSP-SiMatrix will continue to lead the way in silicone fabrication; providing a key component to the local economy and jobs in a unique industry.



An SSP employee working on the fabrication of a silicone product



Two employees in the Clean Rooms used for silicone fabrication

TOP 10 PRIVATE EMPLOYERS

Stock Farm Club



Discovery Care Centre



Farmers State Bank



Apex Human Resources



Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital





RAVALLI COUNTY AT A GLIMPSE

Author: Aaron McNay

Total population: 40,664
(Census, 2008)

Median age: 43 (Census, 2006 -2008)

Median household income: \$44,261
(Census, 2007)

Average unemployment rate: 8.3%
(BLS LAUS estimate, 2009)

Top five industries in terms of employment:

- 1) Food Services & Drinking Places
- 2) Professional & Technical Services
- 3) Specialty Trade Contractors
- 4) Food & Beverage Stores
- 5) Ambulatory Health Care 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.

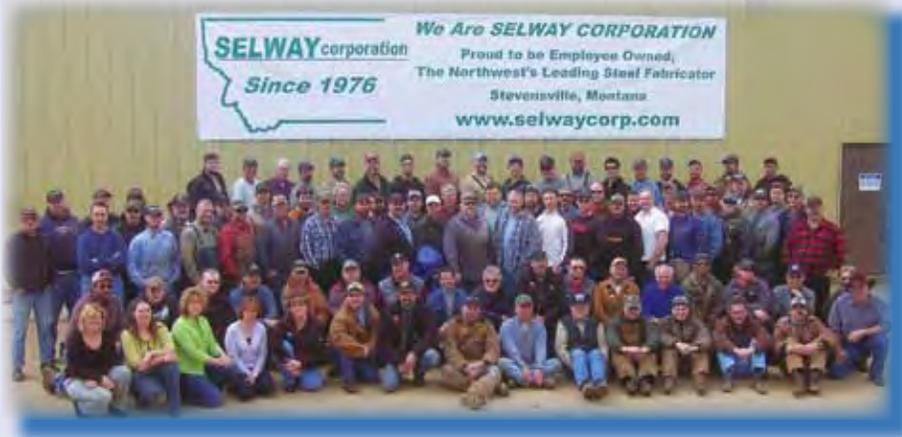
Super 1 Foods



GlaxoSmithKline



Selway Corporation



Kmart



The LivingCenter



IN RAVALLI COUNTY

Apex, Discovery Care Centre, Kmart, Marcus Daly Hospital, Selway Corporation, and Super 1 Foods photos courtesy Casey Kyler-West. GSK photos, courtesy GlaxoSmithKline. Farmers State Bank photos courtesy Farmers State Bank. Livingcenter photos courtesy Bitterroot Valley Living Center. Stock Farm Club photos courtesy Stock Farm Club taken by photographer Peter Wong.

**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 RAVALLI COUNTY

Apex Human Resources



A professional employer organization (PEO), **Apex Human Resources** has one objective, to help businesses effectively manage their human resources so they can spend more time building up their business. Founded in 1999, **Apex Human Resources** has five in-house employees and 150 co-employed employees throughout Montana.

Modern technology has allowed Internet based businesses like **Apex Human Resources** to form and serve their clients from literally anywhere in the world. "When we formed our business, all of our clients were outside the state of Montana. The only way we could serve them efficiently was through the Internet," said **Apex** spokesman Adam Sangster.

When it comes to retaining employees, Sangster says recruitment and training are vital. "Hiring the right employee in the beginning is essential, so initial recruitment is extremely important. Your employees must feel appreciated, respected and valued. They must have the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills as they grow in their careers."

Discovery Care Centre



Built by Bill Watkins and his family, **Discovery Care Centre** is one of the few privately owned elderly communities in Montana. Through the years **Discovery Care Centre** has grown and provides several types of services to seniors, people who need rehabilitation and their families.

Those services include assisted living, skilled nursing, adult day and respite care, rehabilitation after surgery and end of life enhancements.

Nestled against the Bitterroot River with views of the Bitterroot Mountains, **Discovery Care Centre** is located just two blocks north of the Marcus Daily Hospital. It is also within minutes of local restaurants and shops, giving its residents the opportunity to get out and about in Hamilton.

Along with its employees, **Discovery Care Centre** also has several volunteers who visit with residents, read to them, help set up special events and play games with individuals or groups.

Farmers State Bank



Farmers State Bank in Victor opened its doors in March 1907. 103 years later, the bank has locations in Victor, Stevensville, Corvallis, Florence, Darby, Hamilton, Lolo, and Missoula, and employs 140 people.

As with other service industries, technology continues to have a huge impact on the banking

industry. "Banking happens 24/7; from ATMs to Internet banking and bill pay along with online money management tools for personal and business use we have it. The days of hand-written ledgers and narrow banking hours are long gone. We are a service industry and technology is a substantial part of that," says **Farmers State Bank** marketing officer Tricia Kiefer.

Farmers State Bank established a scholarship fund in 2000 for high school seniors. The bank awards a \$10,000 scholarship annually in each of the six high schools in the Bitterroot Valley that is paid over four years of college.

GlaxoSmithKline



The mission of **GlaxoSmithKline** is to improve the quality of life by enabling people to do more, feel better and live longer. Headquartered in the UK, **GlaxoSmithKline** has operations based all over the U.S., including Hamilton.

As one of the largest employers in the Bitterroot Valley, **GlaxoSmithKline** believes in offering career development opportunities for all of its 220 employees. The company also makes sure its employees are fully engaged in the mission. "Helping them to understand the role they play in our quest to help people "do more, feel better, live longer" is essential," said company spokeswoman Sarah Alspach.

GlaxoSmithKline relies heavily on technology to keep the lines of communication flowing and to stay on the forefront of emerging trends. "As our business grows worldwide, it is increasingly vital that we maintain lines of communication. Improvements in technology help us to stay close to all aspects of our growing worldwide business so we can remain up to date on changes as they occur. Technology also helps us lower costs, making us more competitive in today's market place," said Alspach. An interesting fact, **GlaxoSmithKline** distributes more than 35 vaccines every second.

Kmart



In 1897, traveling salesman Sebastian Kresge invested in two dime stores with his friend John McCrory. This investment would later change the entire landscape of retailing. Kresge eventually bought out McCrory in 1907, but it wasn't until March 1, 1962 that Kresge opened the first **Kmart** store in Garden City Michigan.

A trailblazer in the retail industry, Kresge was also the first to use newspapers as a mechanism to entice people to his stores. The print ads were the precursor to radio promotions and TV commercials which would follow years later.

In 2004, **Kmart** merged with Sears and now employs more than 133,000 associates. Nearly 100 of those positions are based in Ravalli County.



Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital



As the largest employer in Ravalli County with just under 500 employees, **Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital** has been taking care of people in the Bitterroot Valley for 80 years. Named after the Copper King Marcus Daly who founded Hamilton in 1894, the hospital has deep roots in the Bitterroot Valley.

Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital was originally located on South Fourth Street, but in 1975 it moved to its current location on Westwood Drive. Through the years the hospital has continued to grow, and is now in the process of constructing a new Emergency Department facility. The hospital plans to build a new rehab center when construction on the Emergency Department is complete.

Advances in technology have improved patient care, and **Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital** continues to invest in the latest state-of-the-art technology. The hospital is also working to create electronic medical records, so nursing staff can electronically document patient medical records. As a rural critical care hospital, **Marcus Daly Memorial** will continue to have a large impact on Ravalli County's economy by caring for and employing people in the Bitterroot Valley.

Selway Corporation



Located in Stevensville, **Selway Corporation** has been in the steel fabrication business since 1976. Though it's located in the Bitterroot Valley, **Selway** serves customers throughout the Western U.S., Alaska and Canada. **Selway** produces steel tanks, conveyor systems and structural steel components.

As one of the many manufacturers based in Ravalli County, **Selway** maintains its own production area and has a climate controlled painting and blasting facility. The company also has its own semi-trucks; this ensures **Selway** has complete control of the transportation of its projects to customers.

With more than 100 employees, **Selway** has experienced several expansions over the years and continues to grow. Despite its growth, **Selway** will always consider the Bitterroot Valley home because of the quality of life and the recreational opportunities it provides.

Super 1 Foods



Super 1 Foods in Hamilton and Stevensville are more than grocery stores; as one of the largest employers in Ravalli County, **Super 1 Foods** employs around 80 people. The company also has a large impact on the

local economy, generating an estimated five to \$10 million in annual sales.

As in most industries, technology has had a large impact on how the grocery industry does business. **Super 1 Foods** has moved from telephoning their suppliers to place orders, to instant electronic updates. This allows **Super 1 Foods** to better track inventory and sales.

Stock Farm Club



Stock Farm Club is a private, golf-based community just outside Hamilton. With 19 full time employees and between 70 to 80 part-time seasonal employees, **Stock Farm Club** offers a variety of services to its members. Besides golf, members have access to horseback riding, guided hikes, helicopter tours, guided fly-fishing

trips, hunting, mountain biking, and several other outdoor activities.

The advance of technology has allowed **Stock Farm Club** to engage in paperless correspondence with its entire membership. "We not only depend on it with our membership but rely on it with our vendors and employees," said general manager Matthew Guzik.

Guzik also says although competitive salaries, employee involvement, recognition, advancement and career development are key components to retaining employees, it's important to select the right people. "It is essential for candidates to be passionate about their profession; it has to be fun, not 'work'. That also allows them to balance work and life, after all, this is the Bitterroot."

The LivingCenter



The LivingCenter is a skilled nursing facility that provides round the clock nursing care for residents who need rehabilitation and or specialized nursing care on a short or long term basis. The center opened its doors in 1972 and employs about 100 people.

Its location allows residents easy access to downtown Stevensville or to downtown Missoula, while offering majestic views of the Bitterroot and Sapphire Mountain ranges. **The LivingCenter** provides several different services to its clients including occupational and speech therapy, a beauty/barber shop, and a broad range of social and recreational activities.

As technology has evolved, the **LivingCenter** has moved to electronic health records. This allows accurate documentation with better accessibility for staff.

MTCC VISTA: FOCUS ON THE FUTURE IN STEVENSVILLE

Author: Dean McGovern, Executive Director, Montana Campus Compact

“Dad, can we go to the library on our way home?” “Mom, can we read just one more book?” “Hey Grandma, will you take me to the library again?” All across Montana, kids are solving mysteries, learning new facts, taking adventures, and getting lost in books. Our state’s wonderful local public libraries often play a big role in helping to make reading fun, interesting, and habitual. From Kalispell to Glendive and from Poplar to Hamilton, dedicated staff and volunteers keep our libraries operating and producing outstanding results.

For those libraries that are lucky enough to have them, the children’s section is often bustling with kids— all of them excited to pick out their next book, listen to a story, or ask a friend, sibling, parent, or by-stander to help them sound out a word. Good volunteers and sound programming are critical components to engaging children in reading and improving their prospects for academic success. That’s the goal of a new partnership between Montana State University, The University of Montana, and the North Valley Public Library in Stevensville. Led by the library director, Renee McGrath, the group has successfully proposed to develop an innovative children’s afterschool program at their Main Street location.

“We know that the more kids read, the better they perform in school,” said McGrath, “Strong school performance increases job possibilities and helps combat poverty later on in life.”



A young library patron lost in a good book

The three-way partnership between the library and Montana’s two flagship universities has been selected and funded by the Montana Campus Compact to host an AmeriCorps* VISTA member from July 2010 to July 2011. Patricia Meakin has been hired as the MTCC VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) to spearhead the project. She will create sustainable afterschool and summer programs that will fill a void in affordable, engaging educational activities for area children ranging in age from pre-school to middle school. Throughout her term of service as an MTCC VISTA member, Meakin will write afterschool curriculum, generate capital and human resources from local and regional supporters, write grants, convene key stakeholders, market the program to children and families, and report on challenges, successes, and possibilities moving forward. Most importantly, she will build the capacity for the program to continue by recruiting community members to volunteer their time, expertise, and spare change to the project.



Patricia Meakin (at piano) reads to children at the North Valley Public Library, courtesy Ravalli Republic

Every year, the Montana Campus Compact (MTCC) searches for quality projects that aim to mitigate the negative consequences of poverty and that would benefit from the service of an MTCC VISTA. In July, MTCC will place 22 new members in projects that address homelessness, hunger, environmental restoration, and academic success across the state. All MTCC VISTA projects include a partnership between a nonprofit organization or governmental agency AND a college or university. MTCC VISTAs serve local communities full-time, forty hours per week, for one full year. They receive professional training, a monthly living allowance, and upon completion of their term of service each member receives an education award that can be used to pay college tuition, repay outstanding academic loans, or other educational expenses. Appropriately, Meakin plans to use her education award to finance her master’s degree program in library science.

For more information about Montana Campus Compact programs, please call 406-243-5177 or visit www.mtcompact.org. To learn more about this particular MTCC VISTA project, please contact North Valley Public Library at 406-777-5061.

RAVALLI COUNTY, MONTANA'S BITTERROOT FLOWER

Author: Aaron McNay

With a population of 40,664, Ravalli County was Montana's 7th most populous county in 2008.

Since 2000, the population of Ravalli County has grown slowly, increasing by over 4,000 people over the eight-year period. The largest city in Ravalli County is Hamilton, which had a 2008 population of 4,817. Founded in the late 19th century by Marcus Daly, Hamilton is also the county seat of Ravalli County.

Located in the Bitterroot Valley, Ravalli County enjoys an abundant amount of wilderness areas and recreational opportunities. With heavily glaciated, jagged, and rocky peaks that can be used for rock climbing and hiking; Ravalli County provides endless opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts and anyone else that enjoys the outdoors. The natural beauty of the region has led to strong employment growth in tourism-based sectors.

Employing 1,552 people in 2008, the Retail Trade sector is Ravalli County's largest employment sector. Other significant sub-sectors include the Health Care and Social Assistance, Accommodation and Food Services, and Local Government sectors. In total, these four sectors generated nearly half of all non-agriculture employment in Ravalli County.

The Manufacturing sector is particularly important to Ravalli County, due to the large economic contributions that the lumber and wood products manufacturing sectors provide. With an average annual wage of nearly \$33,540 in 2008,

the Manufacturing sector pays an average wage that is significantly higher than the county average of \$28,496. The highest paying sector is the Utilities industry, which paid an average wage of \$58,708. The Accommodation and Food Services sector is the lowest paying industry, where the average annual wage is slightly less than \$11,600.



Aaron McNay, Economist

From 2006 to 2007, the per capita income in Ravalli County increased from \$26,778 to \$28,511, growing nearly 6.5% over the year. During the same period, the statewide per capita income growth rate was 7%. From 1969 to 2007, the per capita income in Ravalli County increased at an average annual rate of 6.3%, which is slightly larger than the statewide growth rate of 6.2%. The above average income growth in Ravalli County has led to a slight convergence in per capita income between Ravalli County and Montana from 1969 to 2007.

The agriculture sector of the economy continues to remain a vital part of Ravalli County's economy. In 2007, Ravalli County had a total agriculture output of nearly \$35 million, an increase of 22% since 2002. Nearly 80% of Ravalli County's total agriculture value originated from the sale of livestock, which generated \$28 million dollars in 2007. In addition, Ravalli County ranks second in the state in terms of the sales value of milk and other dairy products from cows.

Wood Product Manufacturing Employment, 2008



Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)

HOT WORK: MONTANA'S REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP AND TRAINING PROGRAM GOES HIGH-VOLTAGE IN RAVALLI COUNTY

Author: Jennifer Lawson

If you live in Ravalli County you may not know Ken Buhler by name but you've probably benefitted from his work. Ken climbs power poles, works on high voltage lines directly with his hands (in protective gloves) and he builds and frames power poles. Ken grew up in Darby and is now an Apprentice Lineman with Ravalli Electric Co-op in Corvallis.

Ken's apprenticeship is part of Montana's Registered Apprenticeship and Training Program, an earn-while-you-learn jobs program that produces highly skilled workers that can earn a higher than average wage with more job security.

"I'm working hands-on and every day you get to go to different locations and there is something different about each job... and you get paid to do it," said Ken Buhler, Apprentice Lineman. "It's a great deal, getting paid to learn."

Ravalli Electric Co-op is a not-for-profit power company cooperative that is located in Corvallis and has 25 employees. Founded in 1936, it was the first electric co-op in the state created on the idea that rural Montanans didn't want to be left in the dark because they didn't live in the cities. Today, Ravalli Electric serves approximately 8,000 customers and has graduated 5 apprentices over the past 7 years.

"Montana's Registered Apprenticeship and Training Program provides a good partnership and official training for our lineman," said Chet McWhorter, Line Superintendent and coordinator of the apprenticeship program for Ravalli Electric Co-op. "The State program gives us support and that important 'second opinion' that says we're teaching the right things. For our apprentices, receiving 'journeyman certification' with the Labor Commissioner's signature on it establishes credibility."

Ken Buhler is working toward that journeyman certification and is expected to receive it next year. He has completed over 5,800 hours of the 8,000 hour on-the-job training program which typically takes about 4 years. Ken has already finished the intensive schooling/book work part of the program in February through a correspondence assistance learning program provided by Northwest Lineman College in Meridian, Idaho.

"I've got friends who've done the 4-year traditional college thing and they come out of school in debt with no job," said Buhler. "The Apprenticeship program feels pretty secure



Apprentice Ken Buhler working on a high voltage line

because your company has invested a lot of time and money in you."

Once Ken receives journeyman certification, he is expected to receive a pay increase and will be able to serve 'on call' and have more responsibility.

"We met Kenny a few years ago, when he was right out of high school, and he did some summer work for us and had a terrific attitude so we had no hesitation about sponsoring him in the Apprenticeship and Training Program," said Jim McKay, Manager of Engineering and Operations for Ravalli Electric Co-op.

Ken says the training has been worth it. "The best part about it is that I've gotten an opportunity to stay in Montana where I grew up and work in a field that I like."

Currently in Montana, there are over 660 employer/sponsors of apprentices, both union and independent, and 1,200 registered apprentices working in 50 different occupations in 53 of the state's 56 counties.



Apprentice Ken Buhler working on a high voltage line

For more information about Montana's Registered Apprenticeship and Training Program visit the website: apprenticeship.dli.mt.gov or exploreapprenticeship.mt.gov (a website designed for middle and high school students) or call ATP State Director Mark Maki at (406) 444-3998.

HEALTHY MONTANA KIDS PLAN: A RESOURCE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Author: Lynn Soloman, Outreach Specialist Health Montana Kids

It can be a dilemma. As a business owner, you want to offer reasonably priced, quality health care coverage to your valued employees. Too often, the options are less than affordable for you and for your employees. For many small businesses and their employees, the Healthy Montana Kids Plan (HMK) can be a valuable resource.

HMK offers coverage for children and teens up to age 19. Eligibility is based on family size and income. The plan covers office visits and well-child checkups, emergency care, physicals, immunizations, dental visits, vision and hearing exams, hospital care, prescription drugs, clinic services and more. The plan also covers pre-existing medical conditions. There are small co-payments for some families and no family pays more than \$215 per year. There are no monthly premiums.

As of October 1, 2009, income guidelines increased. A family of four – adults and children – with a gross income of about \$55,125 may be eligible for coverage for their children. (See income guidelines).

There has also been an important change for businesses covered through Insure Montana, the state's small-business health care coverage plan. Since January 2010, Montana statute says that households participating in Insure Montana should cover their children through HMK if the families meet HMK eligibility requirements. Families must still complete the HMK application.

Families can apply on-line or download an application at www.hmk.mt.gov or request an application by calling 1-877-KIDSNOW. Families must submit proof of income when applying.

In some cases, a child must be uninsured for three months prior to being enrolled in HMK. Even in cases where a child is covered, however, families are encouraged to apply for HMK and find out if they're eligible prior to making any changes in current coverage.

To learn more about the Healthy Montana Kids Plan, visit www.hmk.mt.gov or call 1-877-KIDSNOW.



Healthy Montana Kids offers coverage for children and teens up to age 19

Family Size (including adults)	Family annual income (approximately)
2	\$36,425
3	\$45,775
4	\$55,125
5	\$64,475
6	\$73,825
7	\$83,175
8	\$92,525
9	\$101,875
10	\$111,225

* Guidelines effective October 1, 2009

Families who earn more than the guidelines should still apply because additional income adjustments are made based on the number of family members who are employed and whether they pay for child care or care for a disabled or dependent adult.



How Employers Can Help

Montana's small businesses can help spread the word about the Healthy Montana Kids Plan.

- Post information in a convenient spot, like a break room or cafeteria, or near the employees' time clock or check-in area.
- Include information in employee mailings or pay envelopes, or have a supply of brochures and applications available from the human resources/accounting/payroll office.
- Contact HMK to schedule a brief presentation about the plan. HMK outreach staff can provide materials, answer questions and help employees fill out applications.
- Work with local, regional or state business associations to get the word out about the plan.

MOUNTAIN PINE BEETLE IN MONTANA: AN UNWELCOME VISITOR

Author: Paula Short, Forestry Division Montana DNRC

It started as a smattering of red trees against a green canopy of forestland on McDonald Pass. Now, about four years later, Montana is in the midst of the largest bark beetle outbreak in the state's recorded history. The culprit is the mountain pine beetle. Its populations have exploded against the backdrop of a string of mild Montana winters and millions of acres of prime feeding grounds: stressed lodgepole and ponderosa pine. An estimated 3 million acres of forestland in Montana has been impacted by mountain pine beetle in the past 3-4 years, and experts suggest the state is in the middle of the outbreak, with another 3-4 years remaining.

The beetle has impacts beyond the forest, too. The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) manages forested trust lands to provide funding for schools and other trust beneficiaries from revenue generated from the harvest and sale of commercial timber. Beetle-killed timber represents a loss of revenue and also concern for future forest-based revenue. Tourism is also impacted by the beetles. The state's urban areas have also been hit; beetle-killed trees have been reported within the city limits of Missoula, Bozeman, Helena and Anaconda.



Helena National Forest, Courtesy DNRC

ponderosa pine trees that have been thinned have thus far been able to fend off bark beetle attacks, even if they are adjacent to heavily infested stands of unmanaged forest.

The viability of forest management activities in Montana relies upon the existence of mills to process logs and diverse markets for a variety of wood products. Efforts to retain Montana's mill infrastructure, promote wood products, and explore opportunities for biomass utilization and energy are ongoing. Federal grants are funding forest health projects that address bark beetle mitigation, fuels reduction, and forest management on state and private lands.

The Montana Mountain Pine Beetle Forum was formed to bring together a variety of stakeholders concerned about the impacts of mountain pine beetle and committed to educating the public, informing policy makers, and learning more about the far-reaching effects of the outbreak in Montana. The group will hold community meetings throughout the state in 2010 to provide information about mountain pine beetles, treatment, mitigation, prevention activities, and long-term considerations.

For more information about mountain pine beetle, the DNRC has established a website devoted solely to this topic at www.beetles.mt.gov.

There are also concerns regarding the impact of so many dead trees on Montana's wildland fire season. Firefighters have observed extreme fire behavior in stands of timber that have recently succumbed to the beetle, but have not yet shed the red needles. The additional fuel could pose new challenges for firefighters during the summer wildfire season.

The Montana DNRC is promoting forest management – both salvage activities in the wake of the beetle as well as preventive mitigations to protect healthy trees – as the most effective response to the mountain pine beetle outbreak. Thinning, disposal of infested trees, and reforestation all play a key role in the response. Field observations suggest that



Pine Beetle in pine sap taken by Jamie Kirby, DNRC Community Forestry Program Manager

CUSTOMARY HOURS

Author: Shirley Rush, Unemployment Insurance Division

Senate Bill 150 passed by the 2009 Montana Legislature enacted a provision in 39-51-2101, MCA, to ensure unemployment benefits are paid **only** when an individual has experienced unemployment, that is, an actual reduction in hours worked. This newly enacted law disallows benefits to individuals who customarily work less than 40 hours per week, unless the individual's hours (or wages) are reduced further.

Prior to this legislation, workers whose customary hours were less than 40 hours per week could receive partial benefits, even though their job may never have been full time. For example, a retail clerk who regularly worked 30 hours per week during the base period of their claim is not eligible for unemployment benefits under the new law if the clerk continues to work at least 30 hours per week. If the clerk's hours are reduced to less than 30 hours in any week, the clerk can file, report hours/earnings, and may receive partial benefits. Any week the clerk reports working 30 or more hours will disqualify the clerk for unemployment benefits that week due to working 'customary' hours.

Determining just what is **customary** for an occupation or position is the tricky part of administering this law change. A grocery store stocker job may vary from 15 to 40 hours in any week so information from employers is required to determine what the individual's 'customary hours' were in the base period of the claim. Employer(s) who reported wages for the individual during the base period of the claim are now asked to provide the number of hours worked each week during that base period. The number of hours worked each week is then averaged for the base period to determine customary hours for the purpose of UI eligibility.

Due to the economic conditions of the past few years, some companies reduced everyone's hours rather than lay off any of their good employees. Their intention was to retain valued workers and allow

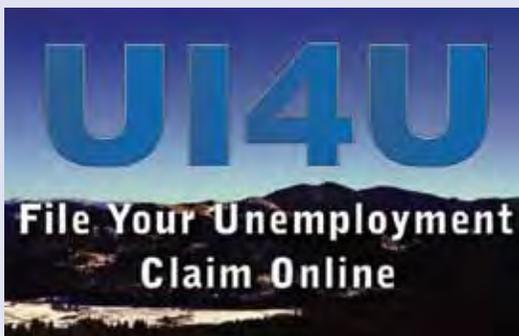
them to keep their benefits -- while drawing partial unemployment insurance benefits until rehire to full time employment. No one expected this economic downturn to last this long and now when these workers establish a new claim (with fewer average hours worked each week during the base period) the 'averaged base period hours' become their 'customary hours' for the new claim. These workers will no longer qualify for partial benefits if working the 'customary hours' of their base period each week.

The law change was made to conform to federal UI regulations and disallow UI benefits to workers who had **not** experienced any reduction in hours and this has been accomplished. It is also impacting workers who were working full time and had their hours reduced due to the economy -- for what has now become their base period of a new claim -- and these hours now become their 'customary hours' for UI eligibility purposes. The economy is improving and hopefully, most Montana workers will be able to return to full time work -- and this law will work as intended for proper program administration of UI benefits eligibility -- with denial of benefits to those who have not experienced any loss of hours in their work.

This provision protects the Montana Unemployment Trust Fund and ensures that only those who have suffered a loss of work are able to draw benefits. It also protects an employer's contribution rate as a result of reducing benefits. Your cooperation in providing hours worked for an employee, when requested by the Unemployment Insurance Division, will greatly assist in proper administration of the UI program.



Shirley Rush
Unemployment Insurance Division



AMERICORPS IN MONTANA: AN EXCITING JOB PATHWAY, GAIN JOB SKILLS AND PAY FOR COLLEGE

Author: Jennifer Lawson

AmeriCorps in Montana provides an exciting job pathway for more than 1,100 members each year, with nearly 20 programs statewide. AmeriCorps consists of both State and VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) programs in Montana, where members can gain job skills, earn money for college and student loans, all while giving back to local communities.



Former AmeriCorps volunteer Stephanie Knisley with young student

“I wouldn’t have the job I have today had it not been for my AmeriCorps experience,” said Stephanie Knisley, AmeriCorps VISTA Alumni and Helena K-12 Community Outreach Liaison. “The AmeriCorps Education Award helped me pay off my student loans, too. The skill-building training you receive is practical, highly applicable and transferrable in the job market.”

“AmeriCorps is a great segue to a job or continued education,” said Taylor Lyon, Montana Energy Corps Member (AmeriCorps State) at the Bio-Energy Center at MSU- Northern. “I’ve learned professional skills like grant writing, public speaking and have been actually able to perform research in the biodiesel field and work with the latest equipment and technology.”

It is important to note that AmeriCorps members are not intended as replacements for otherwise employed workers. Examples of AmeriCorps opportunities, include: recruit, train, and supervise community volunteers, tutor and mentor youths, work to protect civil legal rights of low-income citizens, work to reduce homelessness, build affordable housing, promote sustainable energy consumption, clean parks and streams, build and restore trails, run after-school programs, conduct assessments of emergency health services, and more.

AmeriCorps members in Montana participate in a wide range of projects through direct service (State) and program development (VISTA).

“Participating in AmeriCorps in Montana has many benefits,” said Jan Lombardi, Director of the Governor’s Office of Community Service. “It provides job skills and instills a commitment to public service and creates civic leaders who continue to serve in their communities long after their national service has been completed.”

AmeriCorps State members total nearly 1,000 in Montana and meet critical community needs on issues that include; education, healthy futures and clean energy/environment. AmeriCorps State is a viable job pathway and members can serve terms that vary from 300 hours to 1700 hours, in full-time or part-time capacities from 2 to 24 months. To be eligible for AmeriCorps State participation you must be at least 17 years old. Currently, AmeriCorps State programs include: Justice for Montanans, Montana Campus Corps, Montana Energy Corps, Young Adult Service Corps, Literacy Support Corps and Montana Conservation Corps.

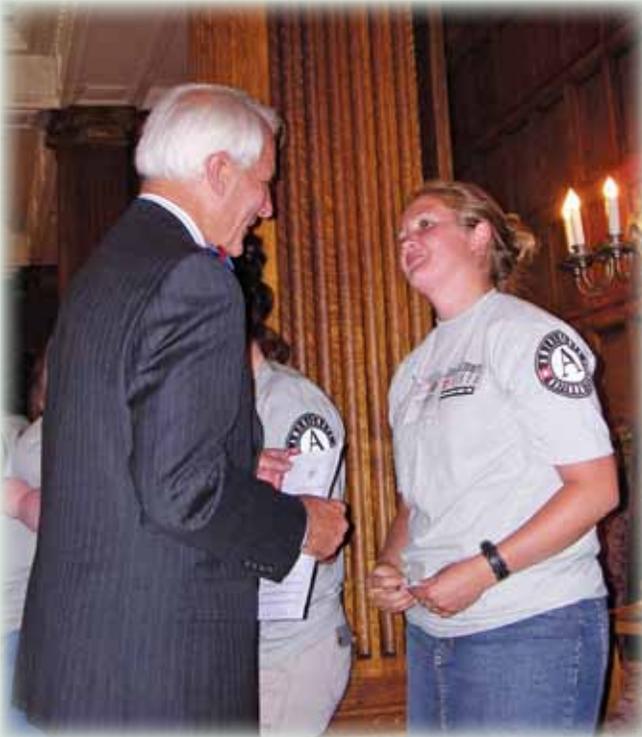
“It’s wonderful to see so many of our AmeriCorps members stepping in to careers with the Forest Service, Park Service, and groups like the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation upon the completion of their term of service,” says Montana Conservation Corps President and CEO, Jono McKinney.

“Receiving the AmeriCorps Education Award, two years in a row, was the only way I could finish college,” said Paige Brockhausen, Montana Campus Corps Member and a Senior at MSU-Great Falls College of Technology. “I was able to apply my volunteer hours in the health clinic, here, and gain valuable professional hands-on experience working in respiratory care. I also worked on local food drives and provided health education at health fairs and schools.” After graduation, Paige has secured a job with St. Vincent Healthcare in Billings.



Taylor Lyon Montana Energy Corps Member MSU-Northern

The more than 100 **AmeriCorps VISTA** members in Montana serve full-time for a year, on poverty fighting issues. To become a VISTA member in Montana most positions require a 4- year college degree, however, there are some positions available that allow a mix of education and work experience. VISTA members are capacity and community builders and work with leaders in communities to, specifically, develop programs. For example, VISTA members might work to build a literacy program but don't actually provide the tutoring. The tutoring could, then, be provided by AmeriCorps State members.



Stephanie Knisley and Lt. Governor John Bohlinger

“The VISTA program is like doing an amazing internship, you get to work with all of these community leaders who are willing to share their experiences and take the time to help and mentor you.” said Jackie Girard, State Program Director for AmeriCorps VISTA in Montana and the Corporation for National and Community Service. “I was a VISTA in Butte, Montana in 1988 and every job I’ve had since then has been because of the professional contacts I made during my VISTA experience,” said Girard.

Montana AmeriCorps VISTA programs currently include: Billings Metro VISTA Project, Communities in Action, Montana Campus Compact VISTA, Montana Legal Services Association and the Prevention Resource Center at the State’s Department of Public Health and Human Services.

“In my 11 years in working with AmeriCorps VISTAs serving in Montana, just about every member that served on our project has said they have learned and acquired invaluable professional work experience that has given them a viable edge in a competitive job market,” said Vicki Turner,

Director of the Prevention Resource Center, an AmeriCorps VISTA program.

After successfully completing a term of service, AmeriCorps members are eligible for an AmeriCorps Education Award of up to \$5350 dollars, per year for up to 2 years, this amount is based on the value of the Pell Grant. The Education Award can be used to pay back qualified student loans or pay for college, graduate school, or vocational training at eligible institutions.

An exciting, new incentive was added last fall for AmeriCorps State members who are 55 years old and older that allows the transfer of the AmeriCorps Education Award to the member’s child, foster child or grandchild.

In addition to the AmeriCorps Education Award of up to \$5350 dollars, incentives for AmeriCorps members can include; a modest living allowance, health coverage, and child care for those who qualify. AmeriCorps VISTA members can choose to receive either the AmeriCorps Education Award or a \$1500 dollar post-service cash stipend.

AmeriCorps in Montana is actively recruiting members this year and the recruitment efforts are featured in a new ServeMontana! Television and Radio campaign that can be found on the Governor’s Office of Community Service website: serve.mt.gov (click on “AmeriCorps in Montana”).



Ad for Serve Montana

The Governor’s Office of Community Service invites you to learn more about the exciting career opportunities with AmeriCorps in Montana; visit the website: serve.mt.gov, call (406) 444-9077 or send an email to serve@mt.gov.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

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

Does your business have a non-discrimination policy? Unfortunately, too many businesses in Montana do not - or worse - businesses may have a policy, but the language is outdated and misleading.

The Human Rights Bureau encourages all employers to develop strong and effective anti-discrimination policies. This is a way for your business to make an explicit commitment to the principles of equality. Additionally, having effective policies in place can protect your employees and may prevent liability in certain circumstances.

If you're just getting started, consider developing a general policy that conveys to your workforce that your business will not tolerate discrimination or harassment based on protected class status. Under the Montana Human Rights Act, a person is protected from discrimination in employment based on age, sex, race, color, creed, religion, marital status, national origin, and physical or mental disability. (The Governmental Code of Fair Practices applies to all state and local governmental entities and also protects people based on political belief). Your policy should advise your workforce of how to report concerns regarding discrimination. If possible, make sure to provide more than one contact in case the primary contact is the person that has harassed or discriminated against an employee.

Having a great anti-discrimination policy is, of course, only the first step. Once you have crafted the language, you have to have a clear picture of the logistics regarding the application of the policy. How will you educate your workforce on the policy? Who is responsible for enforcing the policy? What are the consequences for a violation of the policy?



Widget Inc. is committed to valuing diversity. We believe that all employees and applicants should be treated with dignity and respect. At Widget Inc. we do not discriminate in employment nor will we tolerate harassment based upon race, color, national origin, age, disability, marital status, religion, creed or sex (including pregnancy). If you believe you have witnessed or experienced discrimination or harassment based on any of the above, contact your supervisor immediately or, alternatively, you can contact the Human Resource Office at 555-1212.

Example Non-discrimination Policy

Discrimination Policies” on its website www.montanadiscrimination.com.

In addition to a general statement, HRB also suggests looking at your existing policies for possible problems. For example, some employers may have a policy that states that, “female employees are entitled to maternity leave of 6 weeks after the employee has completed her probationary period.” This policy does not conform to the language of the Montana Human Rights Act; all female employees are entitled to a “reasonable maternity leave” regardless of the length of time they have worked for an employer. Further, a “reasonable maternity leave” may - or may not - be six weeks.

Once you have good policies in place, in order to be effective, they need to be widely disseminated and consistently applied. Take the time to convey the contents of your policy to your workforce as well as new employees, and make sure everyone understands the gravity of a violation of the policy.

The difference between a good employer and a bad employer is not that good employers do not have discrimination complaints, but that the good employers have a process in place to investigate and deal promptly with complaints or concerns about discrimination on the job.

In the upcoming weeks, the Montana Human Rights Bureau will be posting a webinar on “Developing Effective Anti-

If you do not have a policy, or if you are unsure whether your policy is sufficient, we encourage you to check it out.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Bitterroot District Irrigation Company, Oertli's Steam Shovel before the trestle collapsed 1910, Courtesy Montana Historical Society

ASSISTANCE TO BUSINESS CLINICS

City	Date	Location	Sponsor	Fee
Glasgow	June 15	Cottonwood Inn	Chamber	\$30/40*
Sidney	June 16	Elks Lodge	Chamber	\$30/40*
Forsyth	June 17	Range Telephone Building	Chamber	\$30
Havre	June 24	MSU Northern-Applied Tech. Bldg.	Chamber	\$30
Helena	Sept. 1	Red Lion	Chamber	\$50
Billings	Sept. 9	MSU Downtown Campus	MSU – Billings	\$45
Lewistown	Sept. 21	Yogo Inn	Chamber/JSEC	\$40/35**
Great Falls	Sept. 22	Chili's/Macaroni Grill	Chamber	\$50/60*
Polson	Oct. 5	County Health Dept.	Job Service (JSEC)	\$40/35**
Missoula	Oct 6	Doubletree Hotel	Chamber	\$40/55*

Registration fees are set by the local sponsor to cover facility costs, including lunch. For more information or to register, please contact your local sponsor. **Enrollment may be limited, so please respond as soon as possible. Send your registration form and check payable to your local sponsor at least two weeks prior to the clinic.** Sponsor addresses are listed on the back. ***Higher prices indicated are for participants that are not current chamber members and ** are for 2 or more attending participants. **If special accommodations are needed notify local sponsor***

The Governor's Conference on Workers' Compensation and Occupational Safety & Health

We are pleased to announce that 2010 Governor's Conference will be held **September 15th – September 17, 2010, at Big Sky Resort** in Big Sky, MT. Big Sky Resort is accepting reservations for the Governor's Conference, you can contact them directly at 1-800-548-4487.

The cost to attend the conference is \$175 if you register before August 23rd. The cost increases to \$200 if you register between August 23rd and September 12th and the cost is \$250 if you register between September 13th and September 17th, so register early. **Registration will open June 1st.**

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

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