



MAIN STREET

MONTANA

AUTUMN 2012

The Education Issue



Top 10 private manufacturers
College graduates make national gains
Montana's first school
Government operating at the speed of business

INSIDE:



AUTUMN 2012

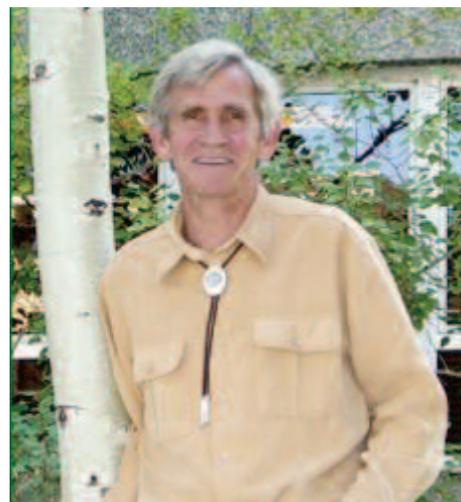
A note from the Commissioner

The past eight years have been filled with some incredible highs and lows. Montana saw its lowest unemployment rate in recent history and what seemed to be an insatiable demand for timber. Then the 2007 recession hit crippling the national and the state economy. Although Montana didn't escape unscathed, we were able to weather the storm and outperform the rest of the nation.

The unemployment trust fund remained solvent during the economic downturn. Montana was among a handful of states that did not have to borrow from the Federal Government to pay unemployment benefits; Montana ended fiscal year 2012 with the second highest ending fund balance in state history, with more than \$453 million dollars in the bank. The ending fund balance is the amount of undesignated, unreserved funds remaining at year end after the state pays its obligations. Our state is in a great position for generations to come.

The Treasure State is known for its abundance of natural resources, and despite the decrease in demand for timber, many of those resources are still sought after. The energy sector along with emerging industries such as information and advanced technology, health services, value-added agriculture, tourism and communications are strong and growing. As the demand for our natural resources changes from timber, to oil and gas, wind, and other forms of green energy, so does the education needs of our workforce. Our workforce is our number one resource and as our economy continues to grow and new jobs come to the state, it is vital that workers have the training and education they need for those jobs.

We have several successful programs that are geared towards giving Montanans the training and education they need to succeed. In fact, some of those programs such as our



On-The-Job Training, Jobs for Montana's Graduates, and Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship programs have gained national attention and are setting the standard for other states.

In this issue of *Main Street Montana* we are focusing on education rather than a geographical location as we have in the past. We'll take a look at the rise of enrollment in Montana's two year schools; how programs like YouthBuild are making a difference in the lives of our youth; the success of the Governor and First Lady's Math and Science Initiative; how the Incumbent Worker Training Program is benefiting workers and their employers; the largest increase of college graduates in the nation; and we'll take a nostalgic look at Montana's first school.

—KEITH KELLY, *Commissioner*
Montana Department of Labor & Industry



Montana Department of
LABOR & INDUSTRY

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Bannack State Park page 22

In this issue:

- 2 A Note from the Commissioner**
- 4 The Wonders of Math and Science**
Governor Brian Schweitzer and First Lady Nancy Schweitzer champion math and science so more Montana students can have exciting opportunities and good-paying jobs.
- 5 Choosing the Right Path**
Career Pathways are bridging the gap between worker's skills and education and the needs of employers who hire them.
- 6 College Students: The Little Engines That Could**
Higher education does more than prepare students for their careers; it gives them the opportunity to give back to their local communities.
- 7 Whipping up a Second Chance**
The women at Passage's Pre-Release Center are whipping up a second chance in life after incarceration and gaining national attention.
- 8 Preserving Montana's Cultural Heritage**
Montana has a rich history, the Office of Public Instruction is making sure students learn that history and understand the contemporary issues facing Montana's Indians.
- 9 Building a Better Future**
At risk youth are building homes for struggling families and a brighter future for themselves.
- 10 In Montana, Small Changes Spur Nation's Biggest Jump in College Graduates**
Montana is increasing its proportion of population with college degrees faster than any other state in the nation.
- 13 First Montana School a Lesson in How Education Has Changed**
A humble log cabin marks the beginning of Montana's Schools.
- 14 Montana's Top Ten Privately Owned Manufacturers**
Meet the manufacturing companies that call Montana home.
- 21 You Can Help Prevent UI Benefit Overpayments**
Did you know as an employer, you can help prevent Unemployment Insurance Benefit overpayments?
- 22 Living History**
Bannack State Park celebrates 150 years of history by allowing students to live history.
- 25 GED Testing Changing in 2014**
The GED Testing Program will change in 2014, what that means for Montana.
- 26 Government Operating at the Speed of Business**
The Department of Labor and Industry's Business Standards Division launches eBiz Solutions to engage customers.
- 27 State-of-the-Art Tourism**
Montana stays relevant in a vastly evolving digital landscape.



The Wonders of Math and Science

The Governor and First Lady's Math & Science Initiative seeks to spark an interest in math and science when students are young. **BY CASEY KYLER-WEST**

You may not know that Governor Brian Schweitzer and First Lady Nancy Schweitzer met at Montana State University in Bozeman where they were both pursuing science degrees—Brian studied soil science and Nancy studied Botany. Their careers took them around the world working on large-scale agriculture and irrigation projects before they landed back in Montana. Since becoming Governor and First Lady, they have championed math and science education so that more Montana students can have exciting opportunities and good-paying jobs.

The First Lady is particularly interested in how hands-on learning can keep kids interested through the critical period in upper elementary and middle school. Programs such as A World In Motion® (AWIM) simulate the work of a scientist or engineer as students build and test gliders, fuel cell cars, and more. Furthermore, the SAE Foundation provides the AWIM curriculum and materials at no cost to classroom teachers. Facilitating opportunities and awareness of programs like AWIM has been a large piece of the Initiative.

Montana's big backyard is an excellent outdoor classroom that easily sparks the curiosity of students to discover and explore the way the world works. Outdoor education is a major focus of many educators, science museums, summer camps, and afterschool

programs in Montana. The First Lady worked with the Montana Department of Transportation to create a series of geologic interpretive signs. Each sign shares a story of our state's geologic history with students, families, and tourists traveling across the state. When a sign is officially launched, a local classroom joins the First Lady to learn about the geology in their own backyard.

Volunteers play another important role in the Governor and First Lady's vision. Volunteers help create that "spark" for students by bringing their everyday experience into the classroom. They also showcase careers

available in the students' own community and share how they got there. Volunteers are a central component of Nancy's Garden, which provides gardening curriculum and materials for Montana classrooms. Teachers are encouraged to connect their classroom garden to the community with volunteers, such as Master Gardeners, and service learning, such as partnering with a community garden.

Ultimately, the Governor and First Lady hope these early efforts will inspire more Montana students to take challenging courses in high school and pursue degree programs in math and science. There is already some good news that Montana is making headway. A report released earlier this year announced that Montana has raised the percentage of adults who have finished college by more than 6 percent over the last three years—a faster rate than any other state.

With more Montana students completing a college degree, it's important they know about the many good-paying, high-demand jobs in Montana that require math and science skills. Over the past three years, STEM job postings in Montana outnumbered unemployed people by nearly 3 to 1. Governor Schweitzer has prioritized energy development and attracting new and expanding businesses to the state. Montana is also home to an increasing number of biomedical and technology companies like the McLaughlin Research Institute and TerraEchos.

With opportunities like these for Montana students to be leaders and changers in a global economy, it's an exciting time to be studying math and science in Montana! To learn more about the Governor and First Lady's interest and the many partners, please visit: mathscience.mt.gov.



Clockwise from above: The Governor and First Lady conduct a science experiment with Helena Middle Schoolers. Fourth Grade students participating Nancy's Garden. The First Lady and Jag debut a geologic interpretive sign near Harlowton.

Montana Career Pathways

BY LEISA SMITH, Executive Director, State Workforce Investment Board

Did you know that by 2018 more than two-thirds of the 47 million projected job openings will require some level of postsecondary education or training, including industry certification? According to a recent study by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), at current rates of credential attainment, the United States will fall short by tens of millions of postsecondary credentials over the next couple of decades. Not only is the U.S. falling behind its competitors regarding postsecondary credential attainment rate, it is also struggling to meet domestic demand for skilled workers. Highly educated baby boomers are reaching retirement age, and the U.S. is not producing college-educated workers fast enough to replace them.

The Treasure State will also be impacted by the shortage, which is why Montana's education and training, workforce and economic development stakeholders are working to respond by establishing a statewide systemic career pathways and

related bridge programs as important strategies for meeting employer workers skill needs and worker career advancement needs. "A systemic approach to career pathways reaches out to a previously untapped labor pool and contributes to sustaining a vibrant state economy," Said Margaret Bowles, State Director of Adult Education.

In August 2010 the Montana Department of Labor and Industry was awarded a Career Pathways Technical Assistance award co-sponsored from the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration and the Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education. The award helped to support and to provide career pathway information systems and to forge effective partnerships with education and training providers, business and industry, economic development, community based organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure programs result in employment and career enhancing credentials.

Career pathway programs attempt to integrate and better align adult literacy and basic education, and pre-collegiate developmental education with postsecondary career

and technical education certificate and associate degree programs, and potentially with the baccalaureate degree. Industry sectors that are appropriate for pathway development are those that need skilled workers and contribute to the economic growth of the region. Employers are engaged by way of identifying competencies for pathway curricula and validating pathways design and credentials. As with other technical college programs, the Career Pathway curriculum incorporates "learning by doing" opportunities through projects, laboratories, simulations, work experience, and internships.

Because of their flexibility, two-year col-

"We're working to help provide a future workforce for the state."

leges play an integral role in the education and training arena. Two-year colleges are able to quickly create programs that cater to a specific industry's needs or demands. For example, Montana's energy industry is growing; some of the occupations within that industry include: welders, diesel technicians, and energy technicians. A two year-school can meet the technical training or certification needs for those types of jobs without necessarily having to change its entire curriculum. "We're working to help provide a future workforce for the state", said John Cech, Deputy Commissioner for Two-Year and Community College Education.

Some of Montana's recent progress toward the development of these career pathway opportunities include: Montana Career Clusters/Big Sky Pathways, a statewide college and career initiative under the Carl D. Perkins and Technical Education Act of 2006. In 2008, with a Workforce Investment Act Incentive grant fund, PEP Talk for Personalized Employment Plan was developed as a new career planning tool to provide resources, and personalized support to develop long-term employment plans that capitalize on personal interests and strengths. 🌟



College Students: Little Engines that Could

Higher education plays a vital role in fostering civic responsibility. **BY DEAN MCGOVERN**, Executive Director, Montana Campus Compact

Montanans have a strong sense of caring for others and toward the common good. From barn raisings and river clean-ups to fighting forest fires and building neighborhood parks, Montanans have a long history of leaning on the strength of their communities. Where does that sense of civic responsibility come from? And, more importantly, what are the most effective ways to foster civic responsibility in younger people? Certainly our families, teachers, and spiritual leaders provide guidance about the importance of citizenship and how everyone can and should contribute to the betterment of society. Higher education can play a vital role too; and be a strong “civic engine” for our cities and towns.

Colleges and universities have a unique capacity to enhance Montana’s economic and intellectual capital. The benefits of higher education are well-known. Campuses continuously discover, create, and disseminate new knowledge. Faculty, staff, and students routinely conduct research that drives technological innovation, new patents and business opportunities. Data consistently reveal the disparity in personal income potential between those with a college education and those without. While colleges have great potential to produce knowledge, understandings, skilled workers, new technologies, and inventions; colleges can also produce graduates who are excellent citizens— ideally, ones who think, act, speak, and write articulately, carefully, and critically. Our state needs engaged citizens who contribute to our collective civic health and vibrancy. Fostering good citizens requires helping students make the connections between the content of their courses and the ways in which they can each contribute to strong local economies, social and political well-being, and collective action that will solve our most pressing problems.

As incubators for developing engaged citizens, college campuses can prioritize civic engagement. The National Task Force on

Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement recently outlined four areas in which colleges can make a civic investment: 1) Foster a civic ethos across campus and educational culture; 2) Make civic literacy a core expectation; 3) Practice civic inquiry across all fields of study; and 4) Encourage civic action. Today, Montana colleges are intentionally building and sustaining civic-minded campuses that serve as good neighbors, partners, and strong civic engines of our communities.



Integrating civic areas into academic courses through service-learning is one way our colleges educate students and make a difference in communities and foster good citizenship. Service-learning is a teaching technique that places students in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs. Professors help students reflect on societal problems and take part in solving them. Data show that students engaged in service-learning report a better appreciation for diversity and ethical decision-making,



Top: University of Great Falls students lending a hand on an Alternative Spring Break service project. Above: Highlands College Professor Bill Ryan’s students work to build a Habitat for Humanity Home in Butte.

increased complex problem solving skills, better critical thinking and analytic reasoning, intercultural competence, and solid knowledge about civic participation. Students who complete service-learning courses generally earn higher grade point averages and are more likely to graduate than students who do not.

For examples, please contact Montana Campus Compact, www.mtcompact.org or 406-243-5177 and become a Facebook “friend” of MTCC at www.facebook.com/mtcompact.

Second Chances

Second chances can be hard to come by, but for the offenders at the Passages Women's Center in Billings a second chance may also be a career. **BY MARK MAKI**, State Director Apprenticeship and Training Program

Aculinary arts apprenticeship program at the correctional facility offers women the opportunity to learn the skills needed to secure meaningful employment in the food service industry. The program is working so well that it is receiving national attention. The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship has awarded Passages and its culinary arts pre-apprenticeship program the 2012 Trailblazer and Innovator Award. This award is given to programs that have "a significant impact on the history of registered apprenticeship in the 21st century."

"The pre-apprenticeship program at Passages is the first of its kind, and to see it receive this kind of national recognition is a tribute to the women who complete the program and the mentors who work with them," said Labor Commissioner Keith Kelly.

The Program was developed after several months of collaborative efforts with State Senator Kim Gillan, the Department of Corrections and staff from Billings Job service Office. At the time, Pre-apprenticeship was a national concept that was loosely used and non-defined for training programs that offered education and/or on the job experience that could lead into apprentice-able occupations. The Montana Apprenticeship and Training Program was the first in the nation to develop "registered pre-apprenticeship" which includes responsibility guidelines for the training entity; stated educational and on the job training requirements; a pre-apprenticeship agreement that is signed by all parties to the training program and a certificate of completion that recognizes the number of hours of training and education obtained by the applicant. The completion certificate provides credibility that the training program adheres to the basic industrial training standards required by the occupation.

The culinary arts program is a mixture of

kitchen and classroom training for eight hours a day. Program participants work alongside and supplement the efforts of a food service operation that produces over 1,000 meals daily. Up to 15 inmates can train at a time, but the participants prior to application, must have completed and passed multiple drug and alcohol assessments, personal counseling and educational requirements, to qualify for the program. Once a participant completes the program, they are required to obtain successful employment outside of the pre-release for a minimum of six month prior to release on parole.

Since it began two years ago, the program has had 13 graduates and the recidivism rate among those women is less than half of what it is for the overall female offender population. Almost all of the women completing the program have jobs and three-fourths of them are using the skills



they learned to work in the food service industry. "Recidivism reduction is one of the key elements of what we do in corrections," said Corrections Director Mike Ferriter. "The amazing outcomes of the participants in this program speak to the quality and value of this training program. I have always believed that developing vocational skills and meaningful employment opportunities are one of the main stepping stones for success, this project solidifies my belief." 🌟



US. Department of Labor Secretary Hilda Solis (left), with Megan Jessee, and Mark Maki.



Program participants presenting samples of their dishes at award reception in Billings.

Indian Education for All

Connecting cultures and classrooms, and closing the American Indian achievement gap.

BY LYNN HINCH, Indian Education Division, Office of Public Instruction

The Indian Education Division at the Office of Public Instruction serves two purposes: The first is to assure that Indian students and communities receive a quality and equitable education. The second is to assure that ALL students leave the public education system with an understanding of the rich history and contemporary issues of Montana's Indians.

The 1972 Montana Constitution provides the foundation for our efforts to implement Indian Education for All in Montana's schools. The delegates to the Constitutional Convention included language in the Constitution affirming the need for the state to recognize the "distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indian." Article X, Section 1 (2) goes on to say that the state is "committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity." We are the only state in the country that has such a provision in their constitution.

In 1999, the Montana Legislature passed into law, MCA 20-1-501, "Indian Education for All". The law clarifies the intent of the constitutional amendment from 1972 by saying;

"Every Montanan, whether Indian or non-Indian, be encouraged to learn about the distinct and unique heritage of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner;



Students from Pretty Eagle School in Hardin, learning Crow hand games

**"I see Montana in a whole new way.
...and I'm from here!"**

There are ongoing efforts to fully implement Indian Education for All. One of the initial efforts was in 1999 when OPI brought together representatives from all the tribes in Montana and created the 7 Essential Understanding Regarding Montana Indians. These define broad concepts tribes have in common and form the basis for all of our curriculum efforts and initiatives.

The Indian Education Office at OPI continues developing resources and strategies for implementing Indian Education for All. Some of these efforts include developing

model curriculum and support materials for use by Montana schools. We will also provide professional development for Montana teacher's to educate them about historic and

contemporary American Indian issues.

Indian Education for All recognizes a continuum of awareness and understanding of Indian issues, and promotes an environment of respect, empathy, and cultural sensitivity. It is a hopeful indicator of the changing paradigm of public education—rather than aiming to inculcate nationalism through a culturally homogenized curriculum, IEFA attempts to strengthen democracy by fostering relationships and including multiple perspectives. It is an ongoing, collaborative, time-intensive process that is, slowly but surely, transforming

educators, students, and communities. "I love learning this stuff along with my students. I see Montana in a whole new way. And I'm from here! I only wish we had had this emphasis on Indian Education when I was growing up", said an Elementary teacher in Bozeman.

Montana students and teachers benefit from this inclusive, educational approach. In Montana, all students, Indian and non-Indian students alike, have their cultural heritages valued and their life experiences validated throughout their educational journey. Students are learning a comprehensive history, appreciate American Indian perspectives, and recognize the fact that we are all Montanans and must work together and understand each other to promote our democratic ideals for all citizens.

For more information, including the Essential Understandings, visit the Indian Education website: <http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/IndianEd/>



Building a Better Future

In YouthBuild programs, young people re-engage in education and develop job skills by building affordable housing in their communities. **BY LISA NEWMAN**, Career Training Institute, Helena

Nationally, the purpose of YouthBuild is to assist at risk youth in obtaining a high school diploma or GED and obtaining occupational skills in construction. As part of the training, students build or rehabilitate affordable housing for low-income families. Career Training Institute is one of two YouthBuild programs in Montana. YouthBuild Helena is a three-year project is funded by the US Department of Labor.

In its first year, 2011-12, YouthBuild Helena served 29 youth between 16 and 24. Of those nearly 80 percent were high school dropouts with the remaining students coming from the local alternative school.

Students participated in educational construction and volunteer activities throughout the year. Because so many of the students are high school drop outs, the main emphasis of YouthBuild is to re-engage those students in education that leads to a GED or high school diploma. Students complete their secondary education through the Helena School District at the Adult Learning Center, Project for Alternative Learning or Access to Success.

The first year was a success. Between October, 2011, and May, 2012, a 1,008 square foot, two-bedroom home with a single care garage was built by YouthBuild students under the instruction of a construction trainer from Helena College-University of Montana. Students learned every aspect of construction, starting with safety and tool use, as well as in depth, hands-on instruction on foundations, framing, drywall, roofing, window/door installation, painting, flooring, trim and much, much more. YouthBuild students received OSHA 10, First Aid and CPR training as well.

Many students earned a Home Builder's Institute Pre-Apprenticeship and Montana Department of Labor and Industry Pre-Apprenticeship certificates. Just as important as construction skills, YouthBuild instructors taught the importance of teamwork, conflict management, problem solving, work ethic, having a positive attitude, time management and good communication.

A public-private partnership has been instrumental to the program's success. Mountain West Bank in Helena made a lot available in the Glacier Point subdivision for the YouthBuild program allowing the program to teach construction skills onsite. Power Townsend provided discounted tools and materials, as well as a generous cash donation. The Lewis and Clark Extension Service staff donated their time to teach students how to lay sod and landscape the yard.



Above: YouthBuild Students work on a house located in the Glacier Point Subdivision. Below, the completed home.



By May, 2012, the house, complete with a single car garage, landscaped yard and underground sprinklers, was ready for an owner. Laurie Koutnik, a local realtor with Landmark Company, offered her services at no cost to the program. Finding a qualified buyer was a unique challenge. YouthBuild regulations require that the house be sold to a low-income family as defined by Housing and Urban Development. The house was sold after only two months on the market.

It's important to mention that students were also engaged in volunteer service throughout the year. The worksites included Habitat for Humanity ReStore, historic Kleffner Ranch, Helena Housing Authority, Lewis and Clark Historic Preservation, Rocky Mountain Development Council, Salvation Army, Toys for Tots and others. The volunteer labor of YouthBuild students at Kleffner ranch was traded for the opportunity to have the YouthBuild graduation party in the historic barn at the ranch in May.

Overall, 72 percent of the students successfully completed the core YouthBuild program. Of these four attained a GED, five received a high school diploma, nine earned HBI PACT certificates and ten earned Montana Department of Labor and Industry pre-apprenticeship certificates. A few students continue to work toward their GED or diploma in 2012 while others have attained employment or entered post-secondary. YouthBuild students continue working with CTI for up to 12 months after their participation ends. Staff assists students with career and post-secondary counseling, job search, job retention and mentoring. ☀



College Credit

In Montana, small changes spur nation's biggest jump in college graduates. BY JON MARCUS

Inside the student union at Montana State University, freshmen and sophomores dig into pizza and espresso brownies and listen to motivational speeches while the marching band belts out the fight song “*We’ve got the vim, we’re here to win!*”

The students in this room are on academic probation, have poor grades or are struggling to adjust to college. All are at risk of dropping out. They’re being exhorted to keep trying, lured here by dinner, entertainment, prizes, even \$50 apiece in cash, for coaching in time management, study skills and test-taking.

Thanks to this event, along with a relentless barrage of free tutoring, “success advising” and other support, an estimated three-quarters of these potential dropouts will buck the odds and stay in school, up from barely half who once did.

They’re accomplishing something else, too: helping Montana increase the proportion of its population with college degrees faster than any other state.

While policymakers and university officials in other states continue to haggle over such things as making it easier for students to transfer their academic credits from one school to another, Montana has simply and quietly done them. In the process, it has raised the percentage of its 25- to 64-year-olds who have finished college by more than 6 percent

over the last three years, the biggest improvement in the nation, during a time when the rest of the country barely edged up on this measure by 1 percent. Fifteen states actually lost ground.

The economic stakes of this are huge. The United States has fallen from first to 16th in the world in the proportion of the population with college degrees, and the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce projects a shortfall of three million college-educated workers by 2018.

There’s even greater urgency in Montana, where per-capita income is 41st among the 50 states and the number of jobs in agriculture, forestry and mining is declining while there’s been a surge in demand in higher-skill fields such as engineering. Yet Montana’s population is the fourth oldest in the country, with huge numbers of baby boomers nearing retirement and needing to be replaced by younger workers. Unless it can increase its ranks of college graduates, Montana will be short 96,000 of them by 2018—in a state with a population of about 1 million people—according to projections by Georgetown researchers.

“This is about making sure we have a generation that is knowledgeable, that will contribute to the workforce,” said Carina Beck, Montana State’s director of career, internship and student employment services. “Because if we don’t do that, we’re in trouble.”

So are many other states. But they’ve been paralyzed by budget cuts and mired in arguments over how to fix the problem. Nationwide, barely half of four-year college students graduate within six years, and fewer than one in five at two-year community colleges finish in three. Only 38 percent of Americans have college degrees, when about 60 percent of jobs are expected to require them by 2018.

Montana’s success in closing this gap hasn’t resulted from some secret formula, said Judy Heiman, who has worked with Montana officials as an outside consultant on this issue. It’s come from a willingness in this no-nonsense state simply to adopt the ideas that education advocates have been urging for years—but that policymakers, university administrators and faculty elsewhere continue to debate.

By comparison, after she laid out some suggestions to the governor’s education advisor, Heiman recalled, she was taken aback at his abrupt response.

“Let’s get ’er done,” he said, as if preparing to herd cattle on a ranch.

“There really is that sort of approach there,” she said—“that this is what we need to do, so let’s just do it.”

“This is about making sure we have a generation that is knowledgeable, that will contribute to the workforce.”

Montana started its push to churn out more degree-holders by bolstering its system of two-year colleges. Like other states, it had to overcome perceptions that two-year colleges are little more than trade schools for students whose grades aren’t good enough to go to four-year universities—a matter made worse in Montana, where many of them were, in fact, vocational high schools before being transformed, in the mid-1990s, into so-called “colleges of technology.”

The state legislature allocated enough

money so that the two-year colleges could freeze tuition, even as the cost of public higher education nationwide skyrocketed. Today they're about half the price of four-year universities, which makes them attractive places to earn the first two years' worth of credits needed for a bachelor's degree.

Those who want to learn practical skills that require training and for which there are good jobs in Montana, such as welding and advanced machining, are given information about workplace demand and how much money they're likely to make when they graduate. Those who want to move on to a four-year university and get that bachelor's degree can see their futures plainly, too, since the state has standardized the names and numbers of 90 percent of the undergraduate courses at its public colleges and universities, making credits easy to transfer.

The inability to transfer credits is a huge reason why many students in other states never graduate, education experts agree. Yet faculty often resist accepting credits from other institutions, even within the same university system, because of concerns about quality control.

Montana is one of only seven states that have taken the seemingly simple step of giving identical courses the same names and numbers system-wide. And there was resistance even there.

"It took some fist-banging," said Tyler Trevor, associate commissioner for planning and analysis in the Montana University System. "It pisses off some old-school faculty. It's about control, and it's about faculty control."

Yet before they were brought into comprehensive alignment, Montana's various public colleges and universities had 11 different names and numbers for an identical introductory English course, and 22 for introductory algebra, said Trevor. "And they were all the same class."

All of these changes have helped to double the number of students enrolling in Montana's two-year colleges—an increase so great that the college of technology in Missoula had to put carpentry students to work adding modular offices and classrooms. And a much higher proportion of them are making it to graduation than before.

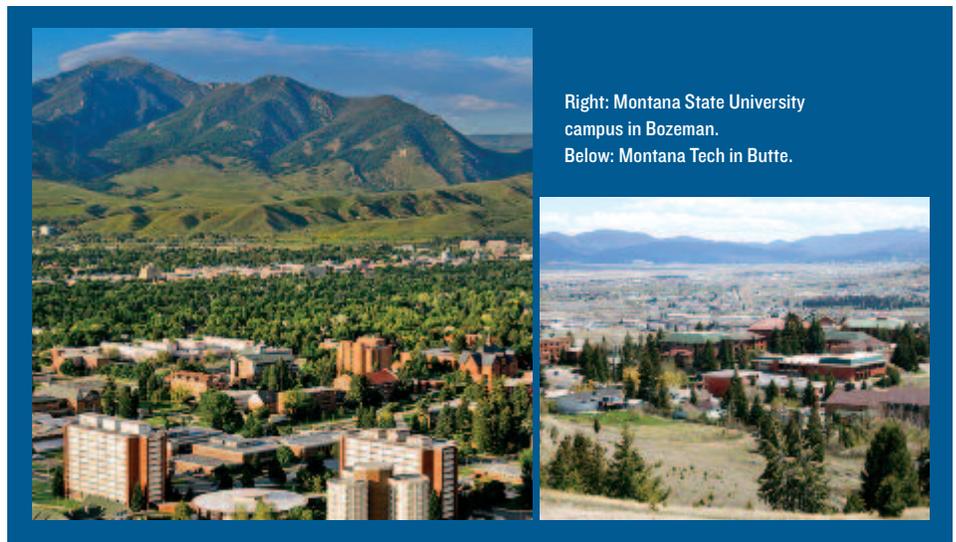
"I wish I could roll out some 10-step program with a long name in academic terminol-

ogy" to account for this, said Bingham. "But, no. We concentrate on the one person. And we cut out the extras."

That's another ironic advantage Montana has going for it: not a lot of extras. The state has historically invested comparatively little in higher education. It's 43rd in per-capita support for colleges and universities, with some of the nation's lowest salaries for faculty and staff. Montana's entire public higher-education system has fewer students than some individual university campuses in other states—47,500 in all, even after a 13 percent increase in enrollment over the last three years. (The Ohio State University, by contrast, has more

Schweitzer, a Democrat, who has a bumper sticker on his office door that reads, "Montana is for engineers."

"I understand that we need a certain number of philosophers, and I understand that it's important to have a certain number of people who study history. But we're not currently creating a lot of jobs in those areas. So we have to look at what curriculums we really need," said Schweitzer, a soil scientist by training. "People who are getting degrees in philosophy and history, God bless them, it's wonderful that they're critical thinkers. But now they're going back to a college of technology to get a life skill to get a job."



Right: Montana State University campus in Bozeman.
Below: Montana Tech in Butte.

than 64,000 students.) And, unlike other states, for better or worse, Montana has few obscure, low-enrollment programs, focusing instead on practical disciplines like engineering.

"We never strayed from the basics," said Donald Blacketter, chancellor of Montana Tech.

Blacketter's university, which sits on a hill overlooking the onetime copper-mining hub of Butte, with a statue of the copper baron Marcus Daly at the entrance, specializes in such disciplines as natural-resource engineering, restoration and ecology, and health care. It has an enviable 97 percent employment rate among recent graduates.

"We don't offer degrees in which you can't get a job," Blacketter said.

That's an outgrowth of the no-nonsense nature of this frontier state, said Gov. Brian

The state has taken other steps to increase the proportion of its population with degrees. It lets some students get college credits out of the way while still in high school, having cut through red tape that would have barred university faculty from teaching them because of public-school teacher-certification requirements. It has expanded distance learning to reach far-flung rural residents, with more than 700 courses and 90 degrees available online. Twenty percent of Montana's college students are enrolled online.

There are still significant challenges. High-paying jobs in the booming eastern Montana oil fields threaten to divert potential students, slowing the enrollment surge. Only 3 percent of adults over 25 take college courses, the lowest rate in the West. And while it may be doing better at increasing the number of college graduates than every other state, Montana is still projected to fall short of the number it needs by 2018—but not for lack of trying. ❁

this story was produced by the Hechinger Report, a foundation-supported nonprofit based at Teachers College, Columbia University, that covers education issues for national newspapers, magazines, broadcast outlets, and websites. It originally ran on NBCNews.com.

Education and Labor Market Outcomes

Given the high cost of a college education, many people do not get a post-secondary degree solely as a leisure activity. So why do millions of people pay thousands of dollars each year to get some type of formal training after high school? **BY AARON MCNAY**

For most people, attaining a post-secondary degree is a means of developing the skills and abilities, generally referred to as human capital, and necessary to work in their desired occupations. The development of human capital also provides a good explanation for why individuals with higher levels of educational attainment tend to earn more, and are less likely to be unemployed, than workers with lower educational levels.

At the state and national level, there is considerable evidence that an individual's educational attainment level has a significant impact on their earnings, indicating a significant increase in the individual's human capital. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median earnings for an adult in the United States with only a high school diploma was approximately \$26,350 in 2010 (Figure 1). At the same time, the median earnings for someone with a Bachelor's degree in the United States was more than \$47,000, nearly twice the median earnings of the high school graduate. The same income pattern holds for Montana, with the median earnings of Bachelor's degree holders being 1.5 times the earnings level of a high school graduate. For both the United States and Montana, individuals without a high school diploma earned the least, with median annual earnings of \$18,413 and \$17,117 respectively.

In addition to higher earnings, individuals with higher educational attainment levels also experience significantly lower rates of unemployment. Based off the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistic's Current Population Survey, the unemployment rate for the United States in 2011 averaged 8.9%. During this same time, however, individuals without a high school diploma had an average unemployment rate of 14.1%, more than 5 percentage points higher than the unemployment rate of the U.S. working population (Figure 2). At the other end of the spectrum, individuals with at least a Bachelor's degree had an average annual unemployment rate of only 4.3%. The disparity in educational attainment unemployment rates also appears to apply to Montana's labor force. In 2010,

Fig. 1: Median Earnings by Education Level
(25 Years and Older, 2010)

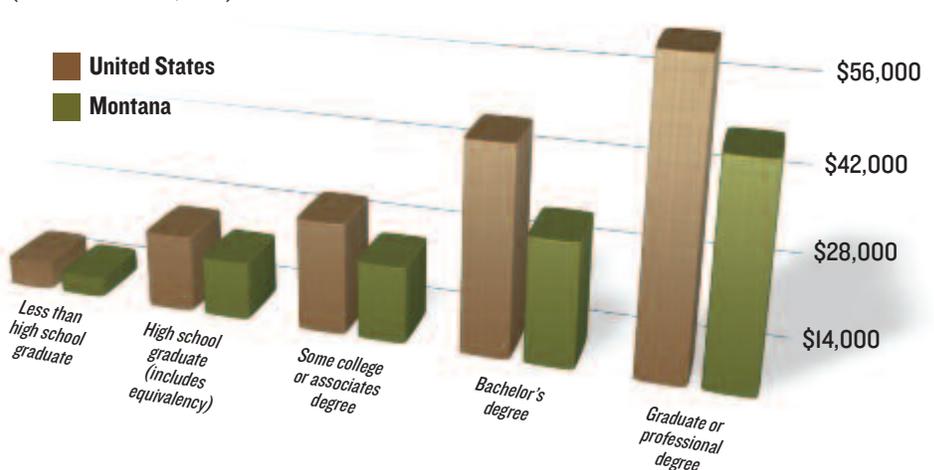
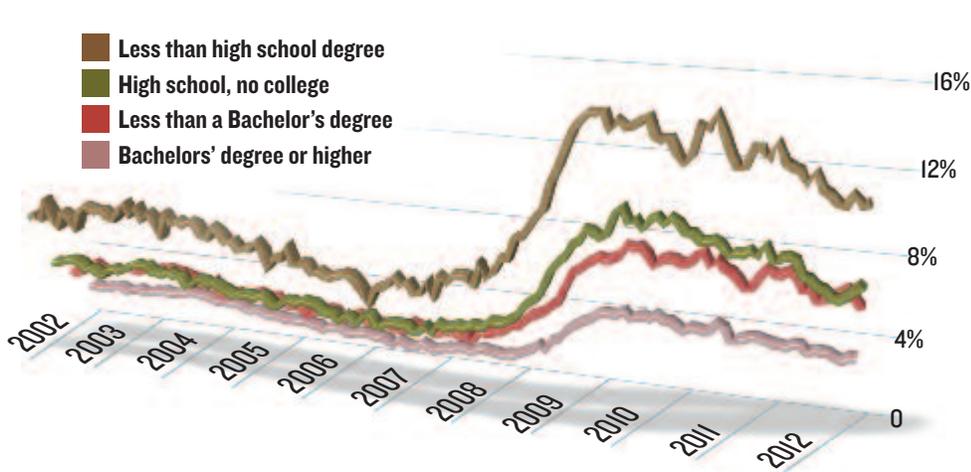


Fig. 2: Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment Level
(United States, January 2000 – July 2012)



workers without a high school diploma had an average unemployment rate of over 17%, while those with at least a Bachelor's degree had an unemployment rate of only 3.1%.

While the quantity of educational training remains a significant factor in determining an individual's economic future, the degree field a person enters also has a significant impact. At the national and state level, individuals who graduate with degrees in Engineering, Computers, or Health Care earn significantly more than people who graduate with other

degrees and may also have lower rates of unemployment. As people struggle to find ways to improve their economic conditions during these economically uncertain times, increasing the amount of formal education they possess is one of the many options that should be considered. Additional information on the returns to education in Montana can be located in the Department of Labor and Industries publication "Degrees of Success: Earnings by Education Degree Types in Montana and the United States."

Montana's First School

A lesson in how education has changed. **BY TOM COOK**, Montana Historical Society

Prof. Dimsdale, begs to inform the public that he has opened a SCHOOL on Idaho street, behind Mr. Lomax's Corral.

With this ad in the Montana Post in Virginia City in 1864 Thomas Dimsdale announced the opening of the first public school house in Montana Territory. He also was the publisher of the territory's first newspaper.

"Having been long and successfully engaged in tuition, he feels sure that the friends of Education will support him in his attempt to establish a really good school in Virginia City. All the branches included in the curriculum of the best Seminaries will be taught in the most approved manner," Dimsdale undoubtedly wrote about his own school and talents.

The "terms" were advertised as \$1.50 a week. The ad didn't say if that included the cost of slate, chalk or books.

The small cabin that served as the first school house was moved by historic preservationist Charles Bovey to nearby Nevada City where it still stands today. Lucy Darling had taught students in Bannack earlier, but she did so out of her home. Mission schools also were opened for Native Americans earlier.

Mary Ronan, who lived in Virginia City, in her memoir wrote that the Dimsdale school was founded in 1863 so there is some dispute about when it actually began.

Ronan said this about Dimsdale and his school which she

attended: "He was an Englishman, small, delicate-looking and gentle. In his school all was harmonious and pleasant. While his few pupils buzzed and whispered over their readers, arithmetics and copy books, the professor sat at his makeshift desk near the window of the log school house writing, writing during intervals between recitations and at recess, always writing. When, during 1864, his Vigilantes of Montana was being published in the Post I thought it must have been the composition of those articles which had so engrossed him."

Education came hard in frontier Montana. On a winter day in 1864 while coming home from Dimsdale's school, Ronan came across a crowd of people gathered on Wallace Street. "The horror of what I saw is photographed on my memory. The bodies of five men with ropes around their necks hung limp from a rough beam."

It gives a harsh definition of homework. At any rate, education has come a long way in Montana from those early days of Dimsdale's school. ❁



SCHOOL.
PROF. DIMSDALE, BEGS TO INFORM THE public that he has opened a SCHOOL on Idaho street, behind Mr. Lomax's Corral. Having been long and successfully engaged in tuition, he feels sure that the friends of Education will support him in his attempt to establish a really good school in Virginia City. All the branches included in the curriculum of the best Seminaries will be taught in the most approved manner.
TERMS:—\$1.50 per week.

Above: This notice in the Virginia City Montana Post in 1864 announced the first public school building in the Territory.

Left: The log cabin in the center of this photo is believed to be the first public school house in Montana.

Playing it Safe

Free workplace safety training offered to all Montanans.

BY GEORGE KOCHMAN,
Executive Director, WorkSafeMT

Compare Montana's work injury statistics to the rest of the U.S., and it's easy to see why injury-related costs—from workers' comp insurance to medical benefits—are high here. Industry for industry, job for job, more workers are hurt in Montana than in most other states—even states like Wyoming, Idaho and the Dakotas, which have an industry mix similar to Montana's.

Quite simply, in Montana we injure our workers more frequently than most of the rest of the nation. SafetyFestMT is trying to change that by making free, high-quality safety training accessible for thousands of Montana workers across the state.

At the Montana Department of Labor & Industry, we believe quality training is key to changing our workplace injury statistics, and that's why we have partnered with WorkSafeMT to provide solid education to help people work safely, whether they operate a crane or sit at a desk. Sending workers to safety training on a regular basis shows that an employer is serious about worker safety and health. Bringing employers and workers together around safety starts a dialog and enables people to share ideas which will change the way Montanans think about safety. This change in thinking will lead to a change in our safety culture and fewer workers being injured or killed while on the job.

Employers often cite two major barriers to sending employees to safety training events—convenience and cost. We know that if we want to make safety training commonplace we need to start by making it convenient. For this reason, each year we hold several events around the state—from Missoula to Glasgow, Billings to Great Falls and even Sidney.

And, training is provided at no cost to participants. Classes are led by top instructors and many count toward OSHA cards. The SafetyFestMT agendas are designed with



SafetyFestMT events in Billings and Missoula



"The training was first class. We can start to apply the lessons next week."

Curt Jevning, Ravalli County Road & Bridge Dept.

Overall great convention; free training of this caliber is hard to come by."

Karla Maier, Korman Marketing, Bozeman

"I actually had about 16 or 17 people I was able to get to the training. I can't say enough good things about it." **John Mikkelson**, Roseburg Forestry, Missoula

"Training at this price is rare and invaluable to the safety and success of our company. Members of our team that have been in our industry for over 13 years learned new safety information relative to their jobs."

Benjamin Wild, Montana Milling, Great Falls

flexible schedules that allow participants to pick and choose the classes they attend based on relevance and need. Participants can attend just one class or as many as they can squeeze in during the week. Depending on where the events are held, we hold as many as 95 classes in a five day period that cover a wide variety of topics and industries; everything

from safety culture to ergonomics, grain handling to fall protection, and much more.

Quality, relevance and accessibility. That's the training Montanans need. And it's the training we deliver.

For more information go to www.safetyfestmt.com or contact Kara Graetz at 406.444.1642 or kgratez@mt.gov.

It's All About Partnerships

Strategic community partnerships foster local economic growth. **BY WOLF AMETSBIHLER**, Missoula Job Service Office Manager

There is a fresh economic development breeze blowing through our city. After an in-depth analysis of Missoula's economic strengths and weaknesses, an asset inventory, and extensive interviews with community members local business leaders launched the Missoula Economic Partnership (MEP) in 2011.

Fast forward to today: MEP's James Grunke, President and CEO, and Brigitta Miranda-Freer Director of Business Development, have formed strategic partnerships and created an effective economic development network weaving together strands of City, County, University, Chamber of Commerce, the Montana Community Development Corp (MTCDC), key businesses, the Missoula Job Service, and several other entities into a tight knit group. This network promotes and supports business expansion, retention, recruitment, as well as infrastructure investment and workforce development. One of MEP's key operating principles is collaboration, bringing other organizations' strengths to the table—in a focused and targeted manner.

The Missoula Job Service remains one of the main beneficiaries of this strategy of forming and maintaining key partnerships. Recognizing workforce availability and development as the primary factor for attracting and retaining companies, MEP asked us to sit at the table—together with the Missoula College and Lifelong Learning Center—

whenever a new company prospect or site selection firm comes to town. We have participated in intensive discussions about workforce readiness, provided in-depth labor market information, conducted targeted workforce research, and supplied MEP with a wide variety of relevant data.

Having earned MEP's respect through high performance, we not only resumed our role as the leading Business Expansion and Retention (BEAR) partner (conducting the vast majority of outreach through our staff), but thanks to a flood of referrals, we maintain a booming Incumbent Worker Training business and receive a large number of inquiries for On the Job Training (OJT) opportunities.

Current projects for our community's partnership include building broad support for the Missoula College to become a modern facility that meets 21st century needs and standards for workforce education and training; securing a couple of excellent new business prospects that could help create 400-500 local jobs in manufacturing; attracting a low cost air carrier; and supporting entrepreneurs through mentoring and identifying additional sources of financial capital. We at the Missoula Job Service look forward to maintaining and building on these close community relationships for a better economic future for all.

To read more about the 2011-2016 MEP Strategic Plan, please visit missoulaworks.org/uploads/PDFs/MEP-Strategic_Plan.pdf



Why Hire a Veteran?

BY DAN BERNHARDT, DLI Veterans Employment Program Coordinator

By now, there is a good chance that you have seen the Top 10 Reasons to Hire Veterans either in a magazine, website, or an e-mail. The interesting thing about this list is when I ask a group of employers to create their own top list; it doesn't take long for them to come up with a list very similar to this one.

What surprises me, however, is that more employers do not mention the financial benefits of hiring veterans.

For example, through the Department of Labor, businesses that hire certain veterans may be eligible for a tax credit up to \$9,600! Additionally, through the VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program, there are opportunities for employers to be reimbursed up to 50% of a veteran's salary for up to six months...in addition to the tax credit. An employer may also be able to pay a veteran an apprenticeship wage while the VA supplements that veteran's salary up to the journeyman wage.

Peak your interest? If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact your local job service office.

TOP TEN REASONS:

- ★ Ability to learn new skills and concepts.
- ★ Strong leadership qualities
- ★ Flexibility to work strongly in teams or work independently
- ★ Diversity and strong interpersonal skills
- ★ Ability to work efficiently and diligently in a fast-paced environment
- ★ Respect for procedures and accountability
- ★ Hands on experience with technology and globalization
- ★ Strong personal integrity
- ★ Strong sense of health, safety and property standards
- ★ Triumph over adversity



Missoula Job Service Office Staff Members

TOP 10 MANUFACTURERS IN MONTANA

Advanced Silicon Materials LLC

Located in Butte, Advanced Silicon Materials is a subsidiary of the Renewable Energy Corporation. An international company, REC has manufacturing locations all over the world.

Advanced Silicon Materials in Butte produces polysilicon and silane gas for the electronics market. The company uses silane gas as the precursor material for polysilicon manufacturing. This allows Advanced Silicon to keep its costs down and significantly reduce the environmental impact. The plant in Butte employs roughly three hundred people.

Applied Materials Inc.

In December 2009 Applied Materials Inc., acquired Semitool in Kalispell to address emerging opportunities in the high-growth wafer packaging market and provide complementary systems and technology for advanced semiconductor manufacturing.

Applied Materials provides innovative equipment, services and software to enable the manufacture of advanced semiconductor, flat panel display and solar photovoltaic products. In other words, its technologies make innovations like smartphones, flat screen TVs and solar panels more affordable and accessible to consumers.

Applied Materials began in 1967 as a small industrial unit in Mountain View, California, now more than 40 years later it is a global leader with locations all over the world. Today the company operates in four reportable segments: Silicon, Display, Energy and Environmental Solutions and Applied Global Service and employs 14,600 people around the world, more than 500 are located in Montana.

BCI Coca Cola Bottling Co

When Atlanta Pharmacist John Pemberton combined his caramel colored liquid with carbonated water from Jacob's Pharmacy in 1886 he had no idea that 114 years later his simple concoction would turn into a soft drink icon consumed by millions around the world. In the early days patrons of Jacob's pharmacy could buy a glass of Coca Cola for nine-cents a glass. Now consumers can buy cans, bottles, and cups of the classic soda, along with a slew of other products.

Today there are more than 300 bottling partners distributing Coca Cola and other Coke products to local grocery stores, restaurants and street vendors around the world. BCI Coca Cola Bottling Company in Missoula has more than 100 employees who distribute Coke to businesses in and around the Missoula area.

Cenex Harvest States

With 7,000 employees around the world and more than 1,000 in Montana, it's no wonder that Cenex Harvest States (CHS) is one Montana's top ten manufacturers.

A company as diversified as its employees, CHS is committed to providing essential resources that enrich lives around the world. Those resources include energy, grains, food and food ingredients, crop nutrients and

livestock feed.

Grain delivered to the CHS elevators in Cut Bank is transported by rail to customers in the U.S. and around the world, primarily along the Pacific Rim. CHS operates petroleum refineries and pipelines as well as manufacturing, marketing and distribution of Cenex® brand refined fuels, lubricants, propane and renewable energy products. In addition to those who work in Glacier County, numerous CHS transportation drivers are involved in moving crude oil from the area to the refinery in Laurel.

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

ConocoPhillips

The American Oil Company, ConocoPhillips, got its start back in 1875 as the Continental Oil and Transportation Company. At the time the company distributed coal, oil, kerosene, grease and candles in the west. In 1929, more than two million shares of stock were sold to the Marland Oil Company and the name was changed to the Continental Oil Company.

Today ConocoPhillips has 19 oil refineries around the world, including one in Billings, which has been operating since 1949. The Billings refinery employs roughly 300 people on a permanent basis, but it can employ up to a thousand contract employees depending on the season and the projects. Refinery Plant Manager Mike Wakowski says, "We're always looking for good employees; we do a lot of hiring through Job Service." There is a wide spectrum of jobs performed at the refinery, but most of them are technical and engineering positions. Several of the refinery's employees come from the College of Technology with a two year degree, something the refinery finds invaluable. The Billings refinery has also been recognized by its parent company ConocoPhillips as one the top business units in the world.

Exxon Corporation

Over the last 125 years ExxonMobil has evolved from a regional marketer of kerosene in the U.S. to the largest publicly traded petroleum and petrochemical enterprise in the world. Operating in most of the world's countries the company is best known by its brand names: Exxon, Esso and Mobil.

The Billings refinery began operations in 1949 as the Carter Oil Company and produced 20,000 barrels of crude oil today. After the installation of the first fluid coker in the world, the refinery has grown to include 18 processing units and produces 60,000 barrels of crude oil a day and 450 million gallons of gasoline a year. The Billings refinery is one of seven ExxonMobil refineries in the United States, and employs 250 people.

Interstate Brands Corporation

Acquired by Hostess Brands, Inc. in 2009, Interstate Brands Corporation operates as a wholesale baker and distributor. Hostess is among the nation's largest and

best-known providers of fresh baked bread and sweet goods in the U.S. with annual sales of \$2.5 billion (est.). The company has 36 bakeries and 570 bakery retail outlets nationwide.

Interstate Brands Corporation was founded as a wholesaler selling bread loaves wrapped in gingham by Ralph Leroy Nafziger in 1930 in Kansas City Missouri. Through the years the company grew and acquired other baking companies, until it was acquired by Hostess. Interstate Brands Corporation employs more than 100 people in Montana.

Meadow Gold Dairies

You've seen the milk cartons, tubs of butter and ice

cream in the store, but did you know that Meadow Gold Dairies is more than more than 120 years old? When George Haskell and William Bosworth lost their jobs with the bankrupt Fremont Butter and Egg Company during the silver panic of 1893; they decided to strike out on their own. The two formed a partnership and initially purchased butter, eggs, poultry and produce from local farmers for resale to manufacturers and distributors. Later they began churning their own butter and distributed it to grocery stores. In 1907 the company opened its first ice cream plant and by 1923 the first fluid milk plant opened in Denver.

Today Meadow Gold is a subsidiary of Dean Foods, and has employees all over the country. With two

locations in Montana, Great Falls and Billings, Meadow Gold Dairies provides more than 100 jobs.

Plum Creek Timber

Plum Creek is the largest and most geographically diverse private landowners in the nation, with approximately 6.6 million acres in major timber producing regions of the U.S. Plum Creek produces lumber, plywood and medium density fiberboard in its wood products manufacturing facilities in the Northwest.

Forestry, land sales, manufacturing and real estate continue to be important Plum Creek activities in Montana. Despite being hit by the Recession, Plum Creek still employs more than 1,200 people across 19 states

with approximately 700 of those employees in Montana.

RY Timber Inc.

RY Timber produces 16% of all the structural lumber manufactured in Montana. The company operates two sawmills, one in Townsend and the other in Livingston. Ron Yanke of Boise started the company when he purchased Sequoia Forest Industries from the Wickes Company more than 20 years ago. The Townsend sawmill came with the purchase and in 1996 the Livingston operation was acquired.

RY Timber employs more than 200 individuals in its Montana operations. The company produces an average of 162 million board feet a year.



Putting the 'Act' into Action

Understanding the Montana Safety Culture Act. **BY GEORGE KOCHMAN**, Executive Director, WorkSafeMT

Montana has long had a workplace injury problem. In fact, in 1993, the Montana legislature created the Montana Safety Culture Act (MSCA) to address it. More than a decade and a half later, almost no one realizes it exists.

As a Montana business you pay higher workers' compensation premiums than you would in most any other state in the nation. And the number one reason for the high cost is simple: In Montana, workers get hurt more often—in all industries but one. (See chart) Studies show that safety and injury prevention is the number one method for controlling workers' compensation premiums. Collectively, Montana businesses could save \$145 million per year by getting Montana's workplace injury rates in line with national averages.

You can help reduce your workers' compensation costs by implementing an effective safety program as outlined in the MSCA.

Montana's economy is diverse. Because of that, the MSCA allows some flexibility of interpretation and application and encourages you and your employees to come together to create and implement an effective safety program that meets the specific needs of your workplace.

There are 6 requirements that all employers must meet under the MSCA:

- ▶ Provide all new employees with a general safety orientation containing information common to all employees and appropriate to the business's operations before they begin their regular job duties.

- ▶ Provide job-specific or task-specific safety training appropriate for employees before they perform that job or task without direct supervision.

- ▶ Offer continuing, regular, refresher safety training.

- ▶ Develop awareness and appreciation of safety through tools such as newsletters, periodic safety meetings, posters and safety incentive programs.

- ▶ Provide periodic self-inspection for hazard assessment when the safety program is implemented, new work sites are established and thereafter as is appropriate to business operations—but at least annually.

- ▶ Include documentation of performance of activities listed in 1-5 above for three years.

Employers with more than five employees must meet all the requirements listed in 1-6 above as well as these additional requirements:

- ▶ Implement and maintain policies and procedures that assign specific safety responsibilities and safety performance accountability.

- ▶ Implement and maintain procedures

for reporting, investigating and taking corrective action on all work-related incidents, injuries, illnesses, fatalities and known unsafe work conditions or practices.

- ▶ Shall have a safety committee in place that complies with certain requirement outlined in the MSCA.

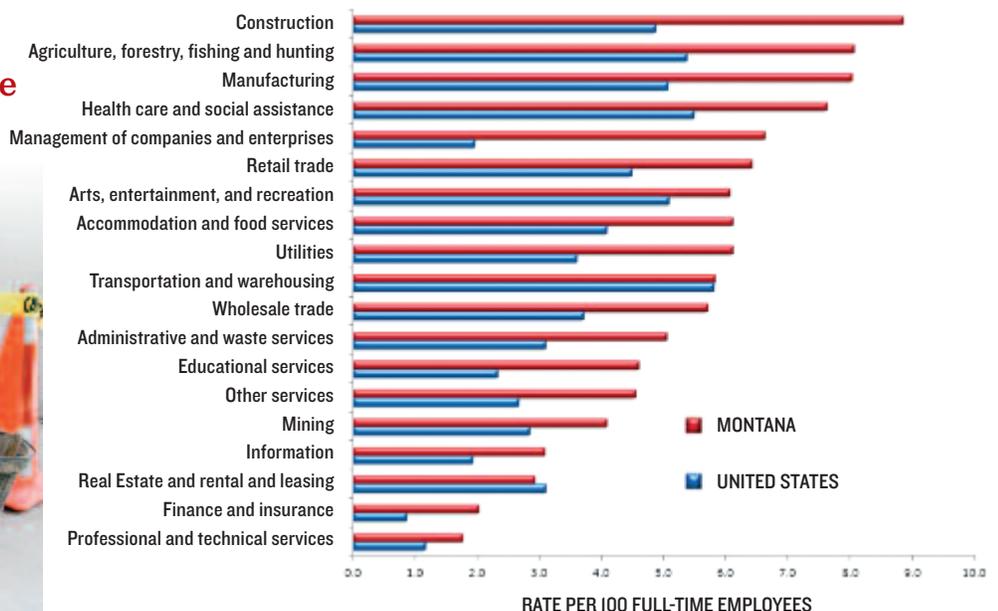
Implementing the Montana Safety Culture Act is a win-win scenario: workers go home safe at the end of their workday and workers' compensation costs will be reduced. And other good things happen as well: productivity increases, employees are more engaged, turnover decreases and product quality improves.

Helping Montana businesses implement the Montana Safety Culture Act is the goal of the Montana Safety & Health Bureau, which offers consultation services for a variety of industries, at no cost. Call 406.444.6401 and ask for help. Safety consultants will walk through your facility observing work processes and recommend improvements. They will identify hazards and provide suggestions for eliminating problems before an employee is injured.

For a copy of the Montana Safety Culture Act including suggestions for implementation, contact George Kochman at 406.444.0982 or gkochman@mt.gov.

Nonfatal occupational injury and illness incidence rate by private industry

5-year average, 2006-2010





Doing a lot with a Little: Investing in Montana's Workforce

Incumbent Worker Training increases the skills of Montana's Workforce. **BY CHRIS WILHELM**, Program Manager, Incumbent Worker Training Program

Incumbent Worker Training is a grant program designed to increase the skills of Montana's Workforce. The ultimate goal is to assist local businesses in preserving existing jobs for Montana residents. An important segment of Montana's Workforce that has been overlooked for skill development is those workers who are currently employed by small businesses but who need to upgrade their skill level to remain competitive and productive in the work place. Montana businesses employing 20 or fewer workers in one location but not more than 50 workers statewide may be eligible for the grant. Grant limits and match requirements vary depending on each employer's unique situation.

Workers benefit because they acquire transferable skills, talents, and knowledge which make them more valuable in the workplace; and are positioned for advancement within the business. For small businesses like Hobson Insurance grant funding allows them to send their employees to training that they would otherwise not be able to. "We live in a

small community, so to be able to send our agents to obtain the certifications that allow them to sell a wider range of products to our clients", said co-owner of Hobson Insurance, Kristy Longfellow-Hodic.

Equally important, Montana businesses—large and small—must have highly skilled workers in order to remain competitive in the global economy. "This program is a key reason why my business has grown from a local publication to a national media platform," said Elke Govertsen, Founder of Mamalode Magazine. "It gives us a chance to compete in a global economy."

Montana's businesses understand that having the highest-skilled workers is increasingly important for meeting their customers' demands for products and services. "With the Laser training program, we were able to speed up production and repairs of fine jewelry and sell more finished ones to the wholesale trade. Shortly after the training, we have already been able to add one more employee to meet our growing sales demand for our jewelry

"We have been able to do so much with the Incumbent Worker Training Program. If I was to give a number to it, I could safely say that RMR has seen an easy \$400k increase in sales with over 25% of that going directly to employee wages."

PAUL DONALDSON, Rocky Mountain Rigging Productions

collection," said Director of National Sales and Marketing for Elichai Fine Jewelry, John Hykes.

Administered by the Montana Department of Labor & Industry and operated in partnership with non-state agencies, the Program relies on local partnerships. Partners vary by community, and include the Montana Department of Labor and Industry's Job Service offices, workers, labor, businesses, the Business Expansion And Retention (BEAR) program, Small Business Development Centers (SBDC), and Montana Manufacturing Extension Centers (MMEC) throughout Montana.

The state-funded grant program serves Montana's employers with \$1,289,428 authorized per biennium. In state fiscal year 2012, the program granted 100% of its available funding. The program is poised to do so again this fiscal year, and eligible grant applications are funded on a first-come-first served basis.

To learn more about the Incumbent Worker Training Program contact your local Job Service Office. 🌟



Elichai staff participating in Laser Training



Left: David Booth, an Air Force veteran who now works at Specified Fittings

ployed for more than three years before landing a job at Specified Fittings in Stevensville through On-The-Job-Training. "I had been applying everywhere...gas stations, home repair shops, coffee houses, and everyone said I was over-qualified. Then I saw this company was coming to town, but I knew I didn't have the skills to do something so complicated. I am so thankful to have this training program, and without it I would not be here."

By the end of the initial grant period Montana exceeded the goal of placing 50 workers into an OJT by enrolling 80 workers into the grant and placing 79 of them into an OJT. The grant was extended by the U.S. Department of Labor to June 30, 2014 and an additional \$1,265,009 was awarded to the State. Montana plans to place an additional 65 participants into OJT.

The grant not only helps workers by paying them as they learn; it has an added benefit to employers. Those employers that choose to participate in the program will be reimbursed up to 90% (\$16.87 per hour) of the wages paid to the worker during the training period. The training period is dependent on the skills the worker brings to the job and the complexity of the job itself.

As of September 21, 2012, 92 workers have been able to take advantage of the grant and be placed in an OJT. Because of this grant, workers are being trained in industries and occupations including manufacturing, electrician, medical billing/coding, bus driving, information technologist, embroidery production, HVAC, cabinet makers, and management.

Businesses and dislocated workers that are interested in participating in the program can contact their local Job Service Office. ❁

On-the-Job Training

An OJT grant to Montana benefits both employers and job seekers **BY SUZANNE FERGUSON**

Montana held its own throughout the 2007 Recession; however, some Montana communities were hit harder than others by layoffs and dislocations. Three workforce regions that include Anaconda, Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Dillon, Helena, Lewistown, Libby, Livingston, Missoula, Polson and Thompson Falls saw job losses exceeding 14,000 in the construction, manufacturing, and mining industries. This led to job losses in retail, accommodations, and arts and entertainment.

On June 30, 2010, Montana was awarded a National Emergency Grant totaling \$889,009. The primary goal of the grant was to serve the long-term unemployed and was expected to put 50 people back to work. It provided On-The-Job-Training (OJT) to those who had been unemployed for 22 weeks or longer; had lost their job since January 1, 2008; and were interested in upgrading their skills through OJT.

David Booth, an Air Force veteran who served in Operation Desert Storm, was unem-



(Sing to the tune from The Beverly Hillbillies:)

*This is story 'bout a man named Jed.
Ol' construction worker, keepin' his family fed.
Then one day he got laid off for good, and into his
bank account came money for his brood.*

UI that is...

Buy some stuff. Get goods you need.

Now don't you know ol' Jed's no worse for wear.

His kinfolk said "Jed you can stay right there!"

"Hometown here is the place you ought to be."

So he loaded up his truck and got busy as a bee.

Job huntin' that is... Regularly seekin' work.



Overpaying?

How You as an Employer can prevent Unemployment Insurance benefit overpayments. **BY JJ COGGESHALL**, UI Program Operations Analyst

A silly take on a once popular TV show theme song, but it shows how Unemployment Insurance (UI) is supposed to work with the partnership of UI and employers.

Sometimes claimants are paid UI benefits when they shouldn't be or can be receiving more benefits than they are entitled. This can occur when the details of the employee's separation were not fully provided by the employer or the claimant was not meeting eligibility requirements—and it is discovered after the fact. Nationally, it is estimated that more than 11% of UI benefits were paid improperly, usually because of inaccurate or missing information.

For example, let's say Jed is not laid off due to lack of work, but was fired for missing too many days to go hunting. When asked by UI, his former employer responds that he was let go but does not indicate the reasons that caused Jed's separation. Benefits could be allowed due to the lack of detailed information, or inaccurate information, provided by his

former employer. Later if the decision to allow benefits is reversed, due to the employer appeal, the claimant will have an overpayment. In a discharge, the burden of proof falls to the employer and if the cause for discharge is not shown (including proper documentation such as warnings and policies), UI benefits may be allowed. All of the facts provided initially can avoid extra work, cost for employers and prevent overpayments for claimants.

The UI division continues to take steps to address the integrity of our program and reduce improper payments to claimants in Montana, but we need your help. We understand as a business owner, you have many issues requiring your attention to keep your business healthy. However, we also trust you do not want former employees allowed to receive benefits who should be disqualified. We ask that you:

- ▶ Report all new hires and rehires to the State Directory of New Hires by the due date.
- ▶ Respond promptly to any "Claims Investigation Earnings Audit" request from UI.

- ▶ Provide timely, complete and accurate Employee Separation Information.

The benefits of increasing UI program integrity to both your business and the UI department are many:

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ UI benefit dollars spent by claimants support the local economy.
- ▶ Keeps the employee in the area for rehire when you may need them.

Your active partnership is vital to improve the efficiency and integrity of the UI program. No one wants a former employee improperly drawing UI benefits. 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.

Finally, UI is an insurance benefit to those who properly and honestly deserve it. If Jed truly was laid off, make sure we know that so we can get him paid. If he was not, please provide us the detailed facts to make a proper eligibility decision for everyone's benefit.

Let's work together to get the results claimants and employers deserve—proper payment of UI benefits only to those who are truly eligible. ❁



Living History

Bannack State Park is celebrating its 150th anniversary since the discovery of gold. **BY DIANE TIPTON**, Montana State Parks

Montana's state parks are among its premier recreation destinations—whether natural resource-based, water-based or cultural. Many are also important living history lessons for young Montanans. Take Bannack State Park in southwest Montana, for example.

Instructors at Helena's Project for Alternative Learning, Renee Driesson and Jeri Rittel say state parks give students "essential hands-on learning that is highly motivational and aids them in retaining what they learn." Recently PAL students participated in Bannack State Park's first "Living History Weekend."

"Students were very enthused that day—we've found Montana State Parks to be critical partners in teaching students how we got where we are, how industry grew in Montana, how the natural world works," Driesson said.

When John White discovered gold on what is known today as Grasshopper Creek, July 28, 1862, he set events in motion that

ensured this little drainage in southwestern Montana near Dillon would be a destination for the next 150 years.

Bannack's gold deposit was rich and easy to work with gold pans, sluice boxes and rocker boxes. News of it drove hundreds of people into the area—3,000 total by spring 1863.

The new town was named Bannack, after the Bannock Indians inhabiting the area, when the post office opened that November.

The following year, under the leadership of Sidney Edgerton and fueled by the gold rush, Bannack became the first capital of a newly formed Montana Territory, and Edgerton its first territorial governor.

Bannack's early citizens made history with every new day. The events and personalities of that time are among the state's most colorful.

Sheriff, Henry Plummer, a legend of the old west, is an example. Plummer was hanged and buried in Bannack for what was believed to be his role in a long string of robberies and

murders. Some people at the time thought Plummer used his position as sheriff to feed information to area thieves and then share in their spoils. Historians today aren't so sure. It is safe to say the truth is long shrouded in a haze of gold fever.

As the mining progressed on Grasshopper Gulch, shenanigans, thievery, gun fights, back breaking labor, bravery, debauchery and high living made timeless stories—the real treasure of this place. The stories bring the town, one of the best preserved "ghost towns" in the nation, alive.

"We've found Montana State Parks to be critical partners in teaching students how we got where we are, how industry grew in Montana, how the natural world works."



Clockwise from left: Kids try their luck at panning for gold at the annual Bannack Days celebration; The building in the forefront was a rooming house and behind it a combination school and Masonic Lodge; Bootlegger cabin and other buildings at Bannack; Treats are served to visitors at Bannack Days.



Today Bannack, a Montana State Park, welcomes a “rush” of visitors every summer. People of all ages are eager to explore the lush stream-side location in the rolling hills of southwestern Montana that has so much to say about Montana history. The town site, in addition to the some 50 historic structures, includes a visitor center, modern latrines, two camping areas and a group-use shelter that can accommodate large groups among the cottonwood and willows that line Grasshopper Creek. Visitors can fish, camp, picnic, bicycle, hike, view wildlife and do photography in the area.

Visitors delight in touring the silvered old buildings, sitting on the merry-go-round in the school house yard, visiting the cemetery, and panning for a little “color” themselves. They leave steeped in stories and images of Montana’s earliest decades when gold ruled.

Living history interpreters on occasion re-enact daily life in Bannack’s heyday with meticulous attention to accuracy in the details of their costumes and props. Bannack Days and the new fall Living History Weekend are great times to experience this form of theatre turned teaching tool. 🌀

Annual Events at Bannack State Park

BANNACK DAYS Third weekend in July. A fun-packed celebration of pioneer life and Bannack’s glory days. It includes “living history” reenactments of common events in the lives of the early citizens of Bannack.

LIVING HISTORY WEEKEND Meticulously prepared living history interpreters costumed themselves as central characters Bannack’s history—the school teacher, boardinghouse owners, saloon keepers, grocers and miners. They researched and reproduced historic details to enhance the learning experience—including Confederate Civil War uniforms representing the many civil war soldiers who chose the West over the Civil War. Other eye-catching details were the “sugar cones” made to illustrate how sugar was transported and sold in the town’s early days, authentic labels designed, printed and put onto cans that lined the grocery shelves, and authentic foods and weapons of the period.

BANNACK GHOST WALK Friday and Saturday night, the third weekend in October, the ghosts of Bannack own the streets and shops. The Bannack Ghost Walk is a reenactment of significant events throughout the town’s history, both spooky and fun.

GUIDED SCHOOL GROUP TOURS Learning activities are based on scavenger hunts, gold panning, genealogy, Montana history and mining. Guided tours of the town site and gold mill are available by appointment.

www.stateparks.mt.gov

PEP Talk Helps the Unemployed

BY ANNETTE MILLER, Information Resources Supervisor

Four years ago, three state agencies—the Department of Labor and Industry, Office of Public Instruction, and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education—came together to collaborate on how to best use funds from a Workforce Investment Act Incentive Grant. Each agency identified a common goal in helping adults develop realistic employment goals. The team wanted to produce a product that was easy to use, sustainable after the grant period ended, available for personal use at home at no cost, and resulted in better outcomes for job seekers. The result is called PEP Talk. PEP Talk stands for Personalized Employment Plan and meets all the goals set forth by the team.

PEP Talk was created and launched in 2009 just as the recession was starting to impact the state and many people found themselves unemployed. Staff from workforce agencies across the state (Job Service, Adult Basic Education, 2-year colleges, etc.) attended hands on training during the fall of 2009. With increasing workloads due to the recession, workforce agencies found that PEP Talk could help them serve more people with fewer staff and started introducing PEP Talk to individuals in their communities.

PEP Talk is a simple 3-step process: awareness, exploration and planning/goal setting. It is designed to take a person through the



process quickly using tools that are available online. The PEP Talk Blueprint is a guide to “walk” a person through the 3-step process. The Montana Career Information System is used throughout the PEP Talk process to compile a list of occupations that match the results of the skills and interest assessments, create a portfolio, and explore occupations and training opportunities. A series of short videos were created to help people through the process on their own. PEP Talk also encourages users to include their families in the awareness process using simple tools like SKILLS Worksheets and cards.

PEP Talk is also being used in the workforce agencies across the state as part of their regular services. These agencies use PEP Talk

in group settings and one-on-one. It has been integrated into Adult Basic Education as a way to move adult learners beyond earning their GED into a career pathway. Miles City Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE) offers “Dinner and a Career” using PEP Talk as part of the session. This program has resulted in an increase in job placements and enrollments in postsecondary education and training. The Missoula ABLE is using PEP Talk with groups of displaced workers. It is being used in the Flathead Job Service with clients with limited computer experience. The bottom line is that PEP Talk is flexible enough to meet the differing needs of local communities.

The most important outcome of PEP Talk is the personalized employment plan. The employment plan contains a long-term goal, the short-term goals necessary to reach the long-term goal, and the details to accomplish these goals. All of the PEP Talk materials including the videos are available at www.careers.mt.gov.





GED Program Undergoing a Major Redesign

BY LEISA SMITH, Executive Director, State Workforce Investment Board

AND MARGARET BOWLES, Vice Chair, State Workforce Investment Board, Director Adult Basic Education, Office of Public Instruction

A high school diploma or General Education Diploma (GED) is just the beginning of advancing pathways to individual career success and self-sufficiency. They also contribute to the growth of Montana's economy. The States' economic fabric hinges on new ideas, technical skills and leadership attributes that will ensure our ability to compete globally and continue to work toward a sustainable future.

However the GED program is undergoing the biggest redesign since 2002. The non-profit General Education Development testing program has been purchased by a for-profit company, Pearson Vue Testing. Beginning in January of 2014 the test will no longer be a pencil and paper test. Test takers will need to have key boarding skills as the test will now be computerized to include essay writing. The new process will still include test batteries, however, test takers will no longer be allowed to bank batteries they've passed while they work on passing the remaining tests. The cost is also changing; currently

Montanans pay \$55 to take the test, however the cost is expected to triple.

With all the changes on the horizon the Future ForGED Initiative is reaching out to community, faith based, education and business leaders to help assist in encouraging, mentoring, and supporting youth and adults in their communities who need to pursue this important step in earning their GED's. The Initiative is a state campaign sponsored by the State Workforce Investment Board and its Youth Council. The campaign goal is to decrease the number of Montanan's lacking a high school credential and to increase the number of Montanan's having earned GED.

You might be asking yourself how that impacts you and your business, here's how: In 2010, Montana's average unemployment rate was 7.2% however, for individuals with less than a high school diploma or GED, unemployment showed itself at 11.5%. A study by John Hopkins University estimates

the cost to society in lost wages and increased poverty at \$250,000 per drop out. Wolfe-Harris Center for Clinical Studies showed in 2011 alone, tax payers shouldered more than \$93 billion in direct costs and lost tax revenue to support young adults disconnected from school and work. Over the lifetime of these young people, taxpayers will assume a \$1.6 trillion burden to meet the increased needs and lost revenue from this group.

In Montana, the state tax revenue would increase by more than \$1.8 million annually from increased wages and levels of spending if Montana decreased the number of adults without a high school credential. Lifetime earnings lost from Montana dropouts for one year amount to over \$830 million. (OPI, 2009). Revenue such as income taxes, sales taxes, and property taxes decline while expenditures on Medicaid and corrections increase.

Please help us in our quest to raise awareness and promote the Future For GED Campaign. For more information find us on Facebook or montanagednow.mt.gov.

montanagednow.mt.gov

Government Operating at the Speed of Business



BY DAVE COOK, Bureau Chief, Building Codes Bureau

“There’s an App for that,” a common phrase these days that often translates to making life easier, faster or more convenient. This is certainly the case for citizens working with the Business Standards Division of Montana’s Department of Labor and Industry.

The Business Standards Division is responsible for public safety and welfare by enforcement of codes for safe buildings as well as supporting the state boards responsible for administering occupational and professional licensing laws. The division recognized that licensees and contractors were seeking alternative methods to engage with the department and often the expectations of these citizens were shaped by their experiences with high performance organizations outside of government.

The division’s eBiz Solution, launched over a year ago, has allowed control to be shared with the public who become engaged as customers and not simply citizens within a defined regulatory framework. Citizen customers applying for various permits and licenses are able to make initial application, follow workflow progress, make required payments and upload any necessary submittal documents from any computer, tablet or

smart phone. Additionally, they are scheduling inspections, submitting updated record information, checking results of exams and inspections and running reports in support of their business directly from the eBiz Solution. They are becoming interactive with the agency to reduce processing times and to improve their own effectiveness and relevancy in a world of unpredictable economics. In short, they are choosing the method, speed and level of interaction they prefer for that transaction at that time.

In the division’s Building Codes Bureau the eBiz Solution has empowered inspection personnel located all across the state with a potent mobile platform transforming their effectiveness and relevancy in the built environment. These inspectors are “partnering” with design professionals, contractors, builders, and trades people by providing fast, effective and meaningful service at the point of delivery through 50 “mobile offices” estab-

lished as a result of the eBiz Solution. Whether it’s jobsite field-issued permits, off-hours business capability or real-time inspection results delivered directly to their smart phones the department’s customers are utilizing the eBiz Solution to keep pace with their own customer’s expectations, requests and requirements.

In the division’s professional licensing bureau, this flexibility and interaction is allows those applying for and renewing occupational licenses to do so at the time of day and in the method that works best for the busy licensee. In addition, the inspection or investigation of distant facilities or complaints in support of board licensing or compliance functions are utilizing the same mobile platform where results are transmitted directly to the licensing record in real time as part of the workflow.

Public demands for innovative methods, greater transparency, and government to re-invent itself to be more responsive to the needs of citizens have led the Business Standards Division to invest in the eBiz Solution. The citizen access opportunities offered by the eBiz Solution allow government to operate at the level and promptness that the department’s business partners demand, in other words, government operating at the speed of business. 🌀

State-of-the-Art Tourism

Montana stays relevant in a vastly evolving digital landscape.

BY SARAH LAWLOR, Montana Department of Commerce Communications Manager

Technology continues to evolve rapidly and travel brands that want to remain relevant to their audience must learn to adapt swiftly. As the state entity responsible for inspiring travel to Montana, the Montana Office of Tourism (MTOT) recognizes the importance of their role in staying technologically-current.

Bridging numerous programs within MTOT, the office maintains a presence in a multitude of electronic environments in order to remain responsive to our consumers. “We have learned as an office and even more broadly as an industry that travel and tourism has a growing dependence on digital resources in order to reach our travelers most effectively” said MTOT’s Interactive Marketing Manager Thurston Elfstrom.

MTOT began with the development of its mobile site, m.visitmt.com, with the first iteration of the site launching in March 2011. It was designed to provide a resource of easy to navigate Montana travel tools for mobile users primarily for use while “on the ground” in Montana. After being in the marketplace for nine months, MTOT conducted a useability

study of the site. Information gleaned from this research is being implemented into a re-launch of the site slated for November 2012.

“The mobile site redesign recognizes that MTOT’s role is not only to provide the planning tools and resources to execute travel in the state but also to provide motivation for travel to Montana” said MTOT’s Web Designer Norm Dwyer. One new component of the site is a trip ideas section which brings inspirational content to visitors looking for ideas in-state or while planning their vacation. In addition, the new site will provide users more opportunity to engage with the content while enhanced functionality allows users to visit m.visitmt.com for their trip planning needs and serves as a travel companion while in Montana.

In addition, this past winter, MTOT launched the GET LOST (in Montana) mobile site, with apps for iPhone and Android following in early summer, to complement the ubiquitous GET LOST in-state campaign. “Montanans have embraced the Get Lost campaign ethos of sharing what they love about the state and the new app gives them the tools to do it on the ground as they are ex-

periencing a place for themselves” said Elfstrom. “Users are able to discover the back-road gems and nuggets that make Montana so special as they travel and they now have a resource to add stories from the road” he adds.

MTOT has created a digital iPad Magazine which debuted in the spring. Designed to meet the needs and wants of tech savvy travelers Get Lost in Montana: The Magazine features a coffee-table book style in a format designed specifically for the device. “This is not a repur-

WHERE TO GET THE APPS:

Get Lost in Montana: Magazine issues #1 and #2 along with the app are available now, both free in the iTunes App Store. A third issue will be available in March 2012.

The **GET LOST (in Montana) app** is located in the iTunes App Store, (for iPhone,) and the Google Play (for Android.) And of course, if you go to <http://getlostmt.com> on your smartphone, you will get the mobile version of the sites.

The **Film Office app** is available to download for free from the iTunes App Store.

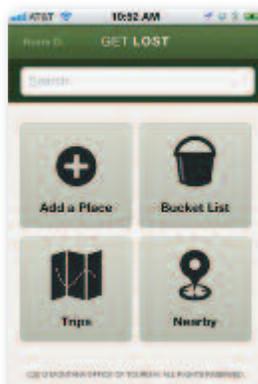
posing of the website or the printed visitor guide. Rather we decided to move the focus to journalistic photography and narrative storytelling which brings Montana’s unspoiled nature, charming small towns and unique experiences to the reader”, said MTOT Publications Manager Bev Clancey.

The Montana Film Office has also developed a mobile app to better assist the film industry in both scouting locations as well as with on-the-ground logistics. It is a comprehensive guide to Montana crews, services and over 2,500 remarkable locations from arid plains to quintessential American towns, to jaw dropping mountainous vistas, all geomapped for unprecedented access. 📍



Left: Get Lost in Montana digital magazine shown on an iPad.

Below: Screen shots from Montana Office of Tourism smartphone apps.





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LABOR & INDUSTRY

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Helena, MT 59624-1728

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Main Street Memory



Main Street, Lewistown. The first school house is on the right side with school children in yard next to the school. A fence surrounds the school and yard. Main Street is in front of the school. Judith Mountains are in the background. Photographed circa 1888 by William H. Culver. Courtesy Montana Memory Project.