

**Montana
Center on
Disabilities**

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www.msubillings.edu/equityoutreach

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New View

Equity Outreach for
Young Women with Disabilities

January, 2005

Happy New Year!

What a great way to begin the new year—we have a new partner! The Equity Outreach project is very excited to welcome Bozeman Senior High School to the mentoring program. Linda Henry and Martha Carstensen from the Montana Center on Disabilities (MCD) at MSU-Billings have been working with Principal Godfrey Saunders, Director of Special Services Yvonne Humble and Assistant Superintendent Marilyn King to iron out the details. Martha and Clarissa Hooper from Montana Independent Living Project (MILP) will be meeting with students at the high school after the first of the year. Clarissa is the community connection for the project and is responsible for mentor recruitment. She can be reached at milpclarissa@montana.com and Martha can be reached at 1-888-866-3822.



What is your New Year's Resolution?

Mentors have the opportunity to positively impact a young woman's life. Eligible mentors also receive training, a small stipend and in some cases mentors can use the mentoring experience to satisfy the criteria of college internships. Please contact Clarissa or Martha if you're interested in becoming a mentor!

Website News

If you have not visited the Equity Outreach website, please check it out at: www.msubillings.edu/equityoutreach. The website is an excellent resource especially for transition and employment information. Every quarter a new issue is featured at the **hot topic** button. This quarter's hot topic is a transition website that features a time line which encourages all of us to start 2005 with a fresh approach! There are many links to websites especially for young women with disabilities including physical, emotional and learning disabilities. The Equity Outreach project is committed to serving young women with disabilities and the people in their lives that have a vested interest in their well-being. If you have ideas for the website, PLEASE, let us know!

Project Updates and Thank You!

From Glendive

Wanda Koffler is mentoring multiple students at Dawson Community High School. The Equity Outreach project had a pizza party in early December with the students, mentors, parents, Bobbi Becker from Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT) and Martha Carstensen, the project coordinator from Montana Center on Disabilities (MCD). Plans were made for a bimonthly meeting to review transition options for the students. Additionally, LIFTT and Martha will offer life skills classes in the future. For more information about the mentoring project or life skills classes, please contact Bobbi at LIFTT (406) 502-9700.

! Glendive Highlight !

One student who is currently participating in the mentoring project at DCHS will gain valuable work experience by working at the LIFTT office.

From Poplar

In Poplar, **Wendy Fleming, Isabelle Youngman, and JoAnn Russell** are mentoring students at the high school. A pizza party for students, mentors, parents, Debra Mason from the North Central Independent Living Services (NCILS) and Martha Carstensen from Montana Center on Disabilities is planned for January 6, 2005. Look out, the students are taking charge and ordering the pizza! For more information about the mentoring project please contact Debra at NCILS (406) 768-3040.

From Wolf Point

Jessica Mason-Cantrell, Faye Htomainie and Zola Baptiste are mentoring students in Wolf Point. After the first of the year, the freshman and sophomores at Wolf Point High School will have the opportunity to learn about the mentoring program when Debra from NCILS and Martha from MCD continue recruitment. Wolf Point's kick off event is scheduled for January. The students, mentors, parents, Debra and Martha will enjoy a chance to eat and share ideas and experiences. For more information about the mentoring project please contact Debra at the NCILS office in Poplar (406) 768-3040. Martha reports being amazed and delighted with the community's enthusiasm for this project. When asked what they hoped to gain from mentoring a young woman, one mentor said a *friend for life!*

**Thank You to all of the Mentors for your time,
enthusiasm, wisdom and experience!**

FFN Focus Groups

Brigid Hagerty from the Montana Center on Disabilities continues to conduct the Family Friend Network focus groups with parents of young women with disabilities who have successfully transitioned into adult life from high school. A focus group in Lodge Grass was conducted on December 3rd and was very enlightening. To enhance the focus groups, individual phone interviews are being conducted with the parents in central Montana. If any parents whose daughters successfully transitioned into adulthood would like to contribute their story, please contact Brigid at bhagerty@msubillings.edu or 1-888-866-3822.

Share What You Know, Mentor a Child!

January is National Mentoring Month, and January 25th is Thank Your Mentor Day. The Equity Project along with our community partners is sponsoring a mentoring essay contest. Write an essay telling us who your mentor was and how you benefited from the relationship. Watch your local newspaper for details or call Martha Carstensen at 1-888-866-3822. **You could win valuable gift certificates from your home community!**

Mentors are always needed to provide guidance, wisdom and sometimes simply an ear to listen. If you're an adult woman with a disability who would like to mentor a young high school aged woman with a disability, please contact Martha Carstensen at 1-888-866-3822.



Friends for Life! A student and her mentor pose for the camera at the Gender Equity banquet.

Employment

Research on employment after high school for young women with disabilities clearly indicates that two or more paid jobs while a student is in high school greatly increases employment success after high school. But in rural Montana paid jobs can be difficult to get! Did you know that volunteering can be a great way to gain experience and sometimes volunteering leads to paid employment? The Equity Outreach Project reminds you **DON'T OVERLOOK THE OBVIOUS!** Family and friends are great sources of employment! If family or friends can't employ you, they might know of someone who can—it's called **NETWORKING**—expanding your contacts to increase your opportunities. Don't wait for the job to come to you. Make it happen! Start with your school. You may have to start by volunteering. What jobs are of interest to you? Is office work interesting or maybe you'd like to know more about how the cafeteria works. Talk to your teacher and find out how to volunteer in the school office, cafeteria, a classroom or with the custodian. It's probably easier than you think. **REMEMBER** often times volunteer positions turn into paid positions and if they don't you still get the benefit of **experience!**



Lori gets organized in the school store at Lame Deer.

Branch out from the school! Is there a restaurant, a grocery store, a mechanic, or maybe a day care in town? Many farmers and ranchers have opportunities too. They have equipment to run, stock to feed, inventory to control; they may need temporary help on a part-time basis. Maybe there is a business in a nearby town that you can arrange to work/volunteer at a couple of times a month.

Look beyond your immediate area and think creatively. Most importantly, talk to adults in your community and let them know that you want to work! If you don't tell them, they won't know!

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Choosing to Dream



Expanding Horizons



Reaching Goals

On our Horizon

- An exciting development is the potential for Laurel High School to come on board as an Equity Outreach partner. The Laurel Locomotives took part in the first Equity mentoring project, and Karen Ahmann, a teacher of Special Education at Laurel, would like to work with the project again. We are excited at the prospect, and our hope is to have former students become mentors! Most of all, we know that more young women will benefit from the positive relationship a mentor offers. Stay tuned for updates about our progress with Laurel.
- We are in the process of developing the Advisory Council and are still interviewing for several more members. If you are interested in having a voice for young women with disabilities and can meet by teleconference four times a year, please contact Linda Henry at 1-888-866-3822 or lhenry@msubillings.edu.
- The Equity Spring Conference is coming together nicely! We are excited to bring together teachers, mentors, students and community members for fun, socializing and information at Montana State University-Billings. The conference is scheduled for April 11th and 12th and will focus on transition issues through a career fair that will include representatives from higher education (Admissions, Financial Aid and Disabilities Support Services), community agencies (Vocational Rehabilitation) and employers. For more information please contact Martha or Brigid at 1-888-866-3822.