



LIFTT

Living Independently for Today & Tomorrow

The LIFTT Connection
Newsletter

YEAR 2024 ISSUE 1

Transportation Inclusion: Getting Out & About

In 2024, LIFTT will promote disability inclusion by advocating for a more inclusive public transport system. There are two types of transport systems: exclusive and inclusive. On one hand, exclusive transport systems are one of the major barriers that prevent disabled people from living independently.

On the other hand, inclusive transport systems and scheduled trips are ADA-accessible and allow disabled people to move within their urban environment and live independently and freely. Disabled people who have transport are engaged in their communities, attend school, work, and live life to the fullest.

Inclusive transportation includes the aging and disabled in society and contributes to its diversity. LIFTT is happy to report that all levels of our government prioritize accessibility and inclusiveness by removing barriers to walking, wheeling, cycling, planning, and public transport, benefiting disabled individuals, complying with the ADA, guaranteeing equal access and

equal opportunity, and preventing injustice.

Thanks to the government's efforts, barriers are being removed, increasing accessibility and inclusiveness in LIFTT's service area. There is a demonstrated willingness to comply with the ADA, promote political, ethical, and mobility justice, and recognize the rights of disabled individuals.

In January 2024, the City of Billings MET Transit and LIFTT will hold an event entitled Bus Adventure in which citizens with different disabilities and the MET team will demonstrate how to remove barriers and overcome challenges experienced by the disabled who use public transportation.

Together, the MET and LIFTT are promoting disability inclusion through public transportation. By participating in this event, LIFTT will provide a voice to the every day lived experiences of disabled individuals and increase awareness of the factors that make transport and mobility accessible.

LIFTT also continues working with the City of Billings Planning and Community Services Department as well as the Billings-Yellowstone County Metropolitan Planning Organization and community stakeholders to provide a disability perspective as city and county transportation plans such as are renewed and updated.

LIFTT is also partnering with the Montana Department of Transportation to create a special between-cities transportation service for the aging and disabled residing in Southeastern Montana. It will be a fixed route service from Sidney to Billings, with Glendive and Miles City stops. We plan to have an accessible van and be able to transport even passengers in a wheelchair.

If you are a person with disabilities in our service area facing a transportation issue, LIFTT stands ready to assist in helping you find and advocate for a solution, call us in Billings (406) 259-5181 or Glendive (406) 948-8500, or send us a message through our website at liftt.org/contact.



"It Feels Good to be Giving Back"

IL Specialist brings lived experience of postpartum depression, addiction to LIFTT

LIFTT Independent Living specialist Dalana Smith does not mince her words when describing the arc her life has taken in the past few years as she talks about going from the depths of addiction towards sobriety and embracing her role as wife, mom, sister, and as part of LIFTT's team. "I was putting a lot of bad out into the world, and I am so grateful to be at LIFTT and giving back after spending so much time taking from others," she says.

Struggling with substance use as a teenager, Dalana dropped out of Dawson County High School before graduating from the Trapper Creek Job Corps in Darby in 2008. Returning to Glendive, Dalana stabilized somewhat until, after giving birth to her son Bristyn in 2013, She found herself facing postpartum depression.

Postpartum depression is a mental health disability that, according to the National Institutes of Health, affects between 10-20% of people who give birth. Characteristics of Postpartum depression include long-lasting, intense feelings of sadness, despair, anxiety, and irritability during the first year after giving birth. When these feelings combine with the new and sudden responsibility of caring

for a child, it can be overwhelming for the new mother.

Dalana soon found herself re-treating into old habits to cope and soon found that the tiger she set out to tame had, as it has for untold millions before and since, tamed her. "I fell into a dark place and couldn't find a

Treatment Court, graduating in December 2018.

Today, Dalana has married her long-time partner Jerry, and they welcomed Bristyn back in 2022. They are raising him alongside Breylie and another little sister, Zuri. The couple has also taken in Dalana's teenage brother, Jase. "I live for my kids. They are what keep my feet grounded." Since coming to LIFTT in 2022, Dalana has found her lived experience and the ability to share it with consumers to be key in forming the connection that is vital in IL specialists' work.

"Every day here at the office, we have consumers come in who are dealing with addiction, depression, and/or other disabilities on

top of the everyday struggles we all have, and by talking with them about my experiences and showing them that whatever they are going through things aren't completely stacked against them I hope they can feel good that I can work alongside them in figuring things out."



LIFTT IL Specialist Dalana Smith (at far right) with her family (from left): daughter Zuri, husband Jerry, daughter Breylie, brother Jase, son Bristyn and their two dogs, Ruger and Bella.

way out," she said. Bristyn was soon placed in the care of extended family members as Dalana sorted her life out.

After giving birth to daughter Breylie in January 2018, Dalana knew that change was needed, and soon. "Becoming pregnant with my daughter was kind of a wake-up call that I needed to do something different," Soon, Dalana found herself in a treatment program under the auspices of the 7th Judicial District Adult

Ugly Santa Brings Some Friends Donations to Christmas Creatures raise nearly \$3000 for LIFTT



From the desk of
**U.S. Claus,
LIFTT Sr. Christmas
Creature**

North Pole
January 2024,

To my friends at
LIFTT and beyond,

It has been a big
year for Ugly Santa!

As the holiday season was getting underway, I chanced to meet two snowmen who were looking for a good deed to help move them from the naughty to the nice list; I dispatched them to Billings, and they made the rounds in the Magic City while I once again returned to Glendive to renew old friendships and make some new ones!

All told, between Billings and Glendive, our team of Christ-

mas Creatures visited over 50 different sites and raised close to \$3000 to support LIFTT in helping people with disabilities become and remain independent!

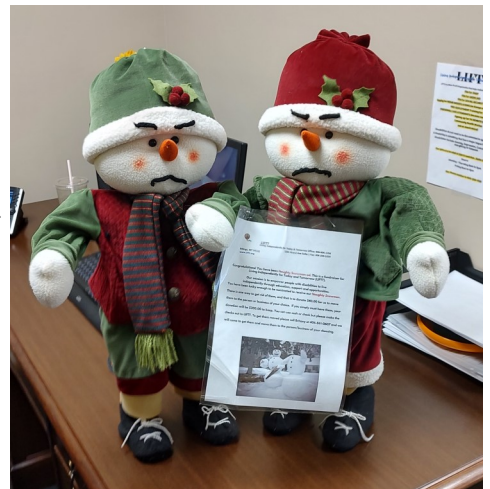
On behalf of myself, the snowmen in the Christmas Creature department, and our colleagues in the Independent Living, Self-Direct Personal Assistance Services, Peer Program, and Administrative departments, we want to thank all the businesses, organizations, and individuals who donated to LIFTT when a Christmas Creature came calling.

All the best, and see you next December,
Ugly Santa

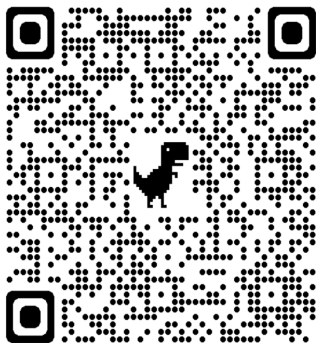
P.S. For final fundraising totals and a complete list of the stops I made in Glendive and the

snowmen made in the Billings Area, check out [LIFTT.org/cc-2324](https://liftt.org/cc-2324)

Also, just because we Christmas Creatures are taking our long winter's nap doesn't mean you can't donate to LIFTT! Find out how at <https://liftt.org/get-involved/donate-support>.



Ugly Santa (top left) got some new helpers this year as the "Naughty Snowmen" canvassed Billings area businesses to benefit LIFTT's programs



Take IL on the Go!
Download the
LIFTT Mobile APP!
Free for Apple & Android

Just use the QR Codes or
go to liftt.org/mobile-app



YOUR CARE YOUR WAY

*Whether you have a physical or mental disability,
LIFTT is here to connect you to the resources to
get the help and care you want and need.*



LIFTT

Living Independently for Today & Tomorrow

Stay connected with LIFTT!



Visit us online @ liftt.org
Billings at (406) 259-5181
Glendive at (406) 948-8500



AGING & DISABILITY
Vaccination
Collaborative
powered by, USAging

Paid by LIFTT with ADVC – Aging and
18 counties in Eastern Montana. We are

Living Independently For Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT) provides an extensive array of services to our community that are free, valuable and greatly assist our disabled community.

To qualify for our services, you must have at least one defining disability, such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, or even diabetes.

Please call for more information today!

Services Offered by LIFTT

- *Information & Referral*
- *Skills Training*
- *Individual & Systems Advocacy*
- *Transition Services*
- *Medicaid Self-Directed Personal Assistance Service Program*
- *Community Health Worker Assistance*
- *Finding Vaccine Clinics, Provide Travel to a Vaccine Clinic, or Provide a Vaccine to Your Home*

**Ongoing
Vaccine Clinic
7 days a week!**

Yellowstone County
Location: Pharm406
1410 38th ST. W., STE A, Billings
Phone: (406) 717-6100
Time: Daily 9AM-7PM; Sat & Sun 10AM-6PM

and Disability Vaccination Grant funding from USAging/ACL. LIFTT is a Montana nonprofit serving
are a person-centered organization, linking valuable resources to those who are disabled and aging.



Otto Bremer Trust Renews Support

Grant will help sustain and expand programs and services throughout LIFTT's area

Living Independently for Today & Tomorrow (LIFTT) is pleased to announce a grant received from the Otto Bremer Trust in the amount of \$60,000.00. to support LIFTT's ongoing operations.

The award is LIFTT's second in recent years from the St. Paul Minnesota-based foundation. Since its founding in 1944, the Otto Bremer Trust has been committed to "investing in people, places, and opportunities in our region of Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and Wisconsin."



THANKS



FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT!

"LIFTT is very grateful to the Otto Bremer Trust for showing confidence in our stewardship of their funds by awarding us this

additional grant; said LIFTT executive director Carlos Ramalho.

"These dollars come at an important time for our organization as we continue to look towards an exciting future of expanding programs and services for and with the disabled community of southeastern and south-central Montana."

If you are interested in donating to LIFTT's work, you can do that by going to liftt.org/get-involved/donate-support/ or contact Executive Director Carlos Ramalho at (406) 294-5190 or carlosr@liftt.org.

WE WANT YOU for the LIFTT PEER PROGRAM!

LIFTT is looking for motivated volunteers to join our team as part of our peer program. The peer program is designed to empower people living with disabilities to learn, grow and thrive independently in their communities.

LIFTT Peers will undergo training that will help them to:

- Learn to advocate for themselves and others.
- Gain new life & employment skills.
- Build confidence and trust in themselves and others through positive interactions.

- Feel as though their ideas, goals, dreams and ultimately their full equality and humanity are seen and valued.
- Make an important contribution to LIFTT's ability to carry out its mission.
- Explore possibilities for vocational growth both inside and outside of LIFTT.

If you would like to know more or find out how you can be a part of LIFTT's peer program, contact one of our peer program co-coordinators who will be glad to answer your ques-

tions and get your LIFTT peer program experience started with an application and interview.

If you are in Big Horn, Carbon, Golden Valley, Musselshell, Stillwater or Yellowstone counties contact Tanya Thomas in our Billings office at (406) 690-6324, tanya@liftt.org.

If you are in Carter, Custer, Dawson, Fallon, Garfield, McCone, Powder River, Prairie, Richland or Wibaux counties contact Dustin Wilburn in our Glendive office at (406) 948-8107 or dustinw@liftt.org

LIFTT agrees with Mountain Made K9 to work on Service Dog Projects

Living Independently for Today & Tomorrow (LIFTT) has signed an agreement with Mountain Made K9 of Billings to work together to provide LIFTT consumers and the community with resources and education relating to service dogs. Under the ADA, such dogs are allowed to accompany the person they are trained to assist in all areas that members of the public are permitted to go. and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack.

Among the tasks that service dogs routinely perform include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting

Under the terms of the agreement between LIFTT and Mountain Made K9, consumers who work with LIFTT to apply for outside grant funding for service dog training will be referred to Mountain Made, who will determine the type and duration of training that for both the dog and handler and if grant funds are awarded, provide the needed training.

"Although not appropriate for every person or situation, a trained service dog can be a great assistance to a person with a disability in being able to achieve and maintain their independence both at home and in the community. We thank Mountain Made K9 for agreeing to work with us on this project to assist our consumers and by providing their high-quality consultative and training services," said LIFTT executive director Carlos Ramalho.



**LIFTT'S
VIRTUAL
Saint
PATRICK'S
DAY**

**THURSDAY MARCH 14
3 TO 4 P.M.**

**Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with us!
Live on Teams with Trivia, Games, and lots of Blarney!**

WEAR YOUR GREEN!

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT TANYA @ 406-690-6324



**1201 Grand Avenue, Suite #1,
Billings, MT 59102
(406) 259-5181**

**1201 South Kendrick Ave
Glendive, MT 59330
(406) 948-8500**

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LIFTT's Mission— Living Independently for Today & Tomorrow, Inc. is Montana non-profit organization committed to empowering persons with disabilities to live freely and equally in Southeastern Montana through the provision of independent living services which reduce societal barriers.

Peer Support Group

Would you like to connect with others living with disabilities?

Join the weekly fellowship of LIFTT's online peer support group. Whether it's games or supportive deep discussion, you're sure to enjoy the new perspectives and the positive sense of belonging.

Join us every Thursday at 3 p.m. via Microsoft Teams for the LIFTT Peer Support Group

For more information or to obtain a login contact Tanya Thomas at (406) 690-6324, or tanyat@liffitt.org

LIFTT is a nonprofit agency governed by a consumer-led Board of Directors whose lives have been personally impacted by a disability.

LIFTT is funded in part through contracts and grants from the MT Department of Public Health and Human Services, USAging and the Administration for Community Living, United States Department of Health and Human Services. The statements herein do not necessarily reflect the opinion of DPHHS, USAging ACL, or HHS.

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