



LIFTT

Living Independently for Today & Tomorrow

The LIFTT Connection
Newsletter

JANUARY 2022

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

INTRODUCING NEW COMMUNICATION TOOLS FOR 2022!

A NEW ADA WEBSITE

LIFTT is proud to announce the launch of our new state-of-the-art ADA accessible website! We invite you to visit the new webpage www.liftt.org and offer your feedback. Please let us know what you think, what changes are necessary, or if we need to correct mistakes.

The new website was conceived with you in mind. LIFTT wanted everyone to freely browse the website's content, information, and resources from anywhere in our service area. Part of LIFTT's mission is to democratize and widen access to independent living services. We look forward to hearing from you!

This project was made possible by the generous donations received from the Charles M. Bair Family Trust, the Marshall & Mary Brondum Special Assistance Foundation, Inc. (MMBSAF), the Dennis & Phyllis Washington Foundation; the Sample Foundation, and the Billings Lions Club. Thank you to all members the Outreach Team who worked on building LIFTT's new ADA accessible website a reality.

Here's to happy and much more user-friendly New Year!



DISABILITY DECONSTRUCTED

LIFTT is excited to announce *Disability Deconstructed*, a new podcast hosted by LIFTT employees. The 30-minute podcast was created to share candid conversations about what it means to live with disabilities and still have an active life.

The podcast's content is based on sharing success stories, valuable resources for individuals living with disa-

bilities, and independent living assistance. The podcast's purpose is to tear down the barriers and misconceptions that have hampered disabled people's efforts to achieve empowerment. Recent podcasts featured the following topics:

November 2021 Audio Newsletter:

This podcast features the audio edition of the Nov. 2021 Newsletter. (To view the print edition, please visit: <https://www.liftt.org>)

Topics include:

- Balancing Accessibility & COVID-19 Precautions at Billings Clinic
- LIFTT Peer Program plans Zoom Gathering for Holidays
- A profile of LIFTT consumer and 21st-century Renaissance woman, Kat Gordon
- Words of wisdom from LIFTT Executive Director, Carlos Ramalho

Looking Back, Looking Forward:

Podcast host and LIFTT Special Projects coordinator Lee Hoblitzell sits down with three of LIFTT's longest-tenured team members and talks with them about how they came to LIFTT, some memorable work they have accomplished, and their vision for the future of the organization.

Lee's guests are:

- Freda Mook, LIFTT's Independent Living, and Personal Care Attendant Program Manager
- Larry Ketchem, LIFTT's Information & Referral Specialist
- Jed Barton, LIFTT's Outreach & Government Affairs Coordinator

The *Disability deconstructed* podcast is available through: Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Player.fm, Anchor.fm, Cast Box, Pocket Casts and Radio Public with more distribution channels announced as they become available. We hope you check out the podcasts and share your suggestions on future topics. We look forward to hearing from you.

Contact us @ (406) 259-5181 or email <http://www.liftt.org/contact/>



LIFTT Staff Member Nabs Billings Gazette Award (along with 39 others!)



Congratulations to Lee Hoblitzell, one of the recipients of the **2022 Billings Gazette 40 Under 40** program, which honors outstanding young adults in our community Lee

is an Independent Living Specialist and Special Projects Coordinator for the nonprofit organization Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT).

His coworker Freda Mook, wrote this introduction of Lee before submitting his nomination. "Lee is a great example of how a can-do attitude can take a person far in life. Lee has been a wheelchair user for the last 20 years after an automobile accident. Certified in Project Management by the University of Washington in 2018, Lee now works on accessibility projects at LIFTT in Billings, and helps to promote independence, dignity, and quality of life for all disabled individuals."

"I am honored to be recognized for this award and want to thank the team members at LIFTT for providing me with such a rewarding job."

Lee Hoblitzell

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Happy new year! It is 2022! The future has arrived!

In the last few years we witnessed many dramatic events simultaneously affecting society, culture, technology, and politics. The COVID-19 pandemic arrived in 2020 and accelerated the disruption, forcing us to step out of our comfort zones into lockdown, remote work, social isolation, and travel restrictions. It required us to think outside the box. After two years of COVID-19, we have accepted that life will never be like before. LIFTT must lead through change, use disruption as a source of inspiration, to become more innovative, and embrace alternative ways of providing independent living services.

Therefore, despite the pandemic, LIFTT decided to welcome 2022 as a new opportunity to seek and find new ways to engage and serve the population of Southeast Montana living with disabilities. We also chose to pursue change through inclusion, equality, and accessibility.

We need ideas! We need volunteers! We need your help! We invite you to join LIFTT's efforts to lead individual and system change by being a safe space for disabled people to meet, talk, exchange, and translate their ideas into action. LIFTT can only be an effective personal and social transformation agent with your support and participation.

Together we can create a more disability-friendly Montana, in which we can freely ask and answer questions, foster dialogue, awareness, and express grounded action. We can build a society that includes people with disabilities and treats them as equals. It is an ambitious but feasible project. It requires your active participation. The changes we want depends on the work of leaders who will hold our communities accountable, to observe and go above and beyond simple compliance with the law.

Like everybody else, disabled people deserve to experience life in society, find fulfillment in one another, and work for a better world. With your support, LIFTT will be able to make a difference in Southeastern Montana through leadership, education, group events, and community activities, advocacy, research, and outreach. Now is the time to create and sustain meaningful changes and make a positive difference in our communities and institutions.

Sincerely, **Carlos Ramalho, Executive Director**



LIFTT Team Spotlight: Lanette Brown

An Employee with Boundless Energy



I would like to believe I have left a small mark for the better."

Lanette Brown, LIFTT Program Facilitator for the Community First Choice Self-Directed Personal Assisted Services (CFC/SDPAS), is naturally drawn to helping people in need. Before joining LIFTT more than 13 years ago, Lanette was unwittingly filling her toolbox with techniques to help others. Along with attending several colleges, Lanette had various jobs ranging from janitor to switchboard operator and from hospital admitting clerk to a kindergarten teacher. In the process, she discovered she had an interest in helping people. She is now working full-time as LIFTT's CFC/

SDPAS Facilitator.

"I started at LIFTT reviewing timesheets," she said, "and when LIFTT's program facilitator position opened up, I took over." During the training process for her new job, Lanette loved working with consumers who needed help. She noted that the self-direct program is particularly satisfying because it allows the consumer to hire people they are comfortable with and gives them the ability to be in charge of their circumstances while, at the same time, accepting help when needed.

Lanette relates well with her consumers. Like one-third of LIFTT's employees, Lanette lives with her own disabilities, including lower back issues, mild depression, and diabetes. She considers her disabilities minor compared to the individuals she assists. "I would like to believe I have left a small mark for the better, for the consumers I help, and I feel every day is a success story – if you can get out of bed, arrive at work safely, and make someone's day a little easier."

Lanette Brown is a busy person. One might think she has enough on her plate to do anything else, but along with her job, she loves exploring Montana and other states with her husband, reading, playing piano both at home and at her church. In the rest of her free time, she is cooking, camping, crafting, solving word puzzles, visiting her grandchildren, and serving as secretary-treasurer for four irrigation ditch companies.

Where does she get all that energy?

Peer Support Group

Would you like to connect with others living with disabilities?

Join the weekly fun and fellowship of LIFTT's online peer support group. Whether it's laughs and games or supportive deep discussion, you're sure to enjoy the new perspectives and the positive sense of belonging. **Join LIFTT host Tanya Thomas for our online peer support groups every Thursday at 3pm.**

Join Zoom Meeting <https://zoom.us/j/93017341646>
Meeting ID: 930 1734 1646
One tap mobile +13462487799, 93017341646# US

LIFTT Glendive office closed to public due to COVID-19 numbers in Dawson County; travel suspended

Due to the uncertainty created by the rising number of cases of COVID-19 and variants in Dawson County; LIFTT has made the decision to close our office, located at 100 1/2 South Merrill Avenue, to the public until further notice. The Glendive team will also be postponing travel for appointments and outreach to other eastern Montana communities for the time being.

The Glendive office will provide services to consumers via phone, email, and other technology. To reach the LIFTT Glendive Team you can use the phone numbers and emails listed on the back page of this newsletter.

We look forward to the day when we can get back to in-person appointments and events without unduly putting at risk the health and safety of our team, our consumers, and the communities we serve.

LIFTT is a not-for-profit agency governed by a consumer-controlled Board of Directors whose lives have been personally impacted by a disability. It is funded in part by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended in 1992 (Title VII - Independent Living Services), and the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (Disability Employment Transitions Division (DETD)).



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We are on the web @
www.LIFTT.org

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LIFTT's Mission— Living Independently for Today & Tomorrow, Inc. is a 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.



LIFTT believes that people with disabilities should have the freedom to work, learn and engage actively with their families and in their communities.

What is a disability? Anything that has a major impact on one's life. It can be anything from depression, anxiety, diabetes, cancer, all the way to a physical disability.

**If you or someone you know in eastern Montana needs help, please contact us.
You can make a difference
<http://www.liftt.org>**

BILLINGS OFFICE: Main/Messaging: 259-5181, Fax Number: 259-5259
Contact Us email form: <http://www.liftt.org/contact/>

SELF DIRECT PERSONAL CARE ASSISTANT PROGRAM

Freda Mook, PCA Program Supervisor, 294-5182, fredam@liftt.org

Lanette Brown, PCA Program Facilitator, 294-5184, lanetteb@liftt.org

Valerie Rowilson, PCA Program Facilitator, 294-5208, valerier@liftt.org

Kasey Mook, PCA Program assistant, 406-606-1762, kaseym@liftt.org

INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

Jed Barton, Outreach & Government Affairs, 294-5186, jedb@liftt.org

Steve Woodard, Data and Quality Control, 294-5185, stevew@liftt.org

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Lee Hoblitzell, IL Specialist & Project Manager, 294-5188, leeh@liftt.org

PEER PROGRAM

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GLENDIVE OFFICE: Main: 948-8500 Glendive reception: 948-8501

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Tonnette Jensen, IL Specialist, Glendive office, 948-8505, tonneteb@liftt.org

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