



Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow

## The LIFTT Connection!

OCTOBER 2020

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

### The Healthy Community Living program helps all people live well and participate fully in their communities.

#### The Healthy Community Living

program is a collaborative project designed by nation-wide leaders, Centers for Independent Living staff and consumers, and researchers. The new program is innovative, adaptive and inclusive! After several years of working with many contributors, HCL is now available for use!

All workshops are provided by organizations that serve people with disabilities.

#### Community Living Skills

Workshop participants can:

- Build support networks with peers in the disability community
- Explore options and possibilities for setting personal goals
- Get information on skills and resources for living and participating in the community
- Build confidence and comfort in decision making and problem solving.

#### Living Well in the Community

Workshop participants can:

- Identify what is meaningful to them and then set quality of life goals to make their lives better
- Make progress toward the goals by applying problem-solving skills and managing emotions like frustration and discouragement, feelings that can get in the way of reaching goals
- Discover tools and skills that can make achieving goals easier, such as communicating effectively and finding important resources
- Explore ways to improve their overall health by changing daily habits
- Practice advocacy and to help make changes that can support them in living well.

All workshops are led by your peers!



There are three certified facilitators for the "Living Well" series: Brent Morris, Katelyn Baker and Tanya Thomas.

To sign up for the class, contact Tanya at 690-6324 or at LIFTT's main number at 259-5181.

There will be a signup sheet that we will maintain at the LIFTT office. Currently, this first class is offered free to all participants!



#### Be sure your vote counts!

Contact your local or state election officials now and make sure your address and party affiliation are up to date and accurate. If you are not already registered, do it now! Ask election officials now about early and/or mail-in voting. If you do not trust the mail, plan now to drop off your ballot at an elections office. Find out now who can legally turn in your ballot. Plan ahead. Do not wait until the last minute!

The Secretary of State has a new Voter Registration Status and Polling Place Locator service. Use this service to find out if you are registered to vote, where you are registered to vote, and the location of your polling place for any upcoming elections. <https://app.mt.gov/voterinfo/>

The Disability Rights Montana website partners with LIFTT to provide voter rights information for people with disabilities.

<https://www.disabilityrightsmt.org/resources/voting/>

Need help registering to vote or understanding your voter rights? contact Jed Barton at LIFTT, 294-5186 or [jedb@liff.org](mailto:jedb@liff.org)

## MEET LIFTT CONSUMER DONNA GOODALE

In recent years, when customers entered a Billings Walgreens, they were greeted with a warm smile and a kind word from Donna Goodale, whose motto is **"Smiles are the currency you will never go broke on, so give them all away."** This is a woman who rolls with the punches and jumps up with a smile.

Donna moved from Iowa to Montana to attend Rocky Mountain College in Billings 17 years ago, anticipating a college degree and a career. But when her funds ran out, she left school to go to work. She hopped from job to job until 2014, when she found her passion for customer service working at Walgreens. Her duties ranged from cashiering to covering the photo counter

and serving as a pharmacy cashier. Her very visual memory also endeared her to both customers and management because she knew where everything was!

**Live to work, work to live** Donna had it all. She was loving her job, moving up the corporate ladder and perfecting her culinary skills. But, in March 2018, her world changed when an MRI showed a golf-ball-sized tumor on her brain. Surgery removed most of the tumor and Donna was diagnosed with anaplastic astrocytoma – a rare malignant brain tumor. Donna recovered and was able to resume her work. One year later, in October 2019, she required a second brain surgery, and, while the tumor was successfully removed, complications including untangling the ocular nerves caused a stroke, leaving Donna paralyzed on her left side and unable to speak.

### Nothing is impossible

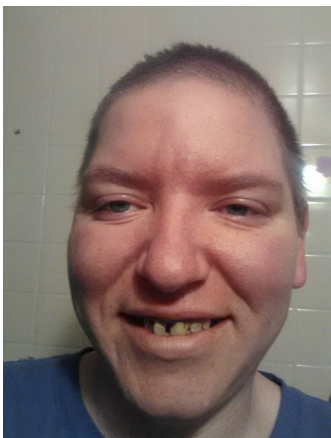
One week after surgery, she was transferred to The Rehabilitation Hospital of Montana. This time she was prepared. Following her first brain surgery, Donna created her own medical library, supplementing borrowed books from the Billings Public Library with purchased books. While recuperating from her second surgery, Donna pored over these books, convinced she could heal faster by using her body as a healing tool. For the next two months she worked on rehabilitation. She recovered her speech by reading aloud to a speech therapist every recipe from a cookbook she was compiling for publication. Because she is left-handed, Donna taught herself to write with her right hand. And along with a therapist working to regain the use of her legs, Donna, initiated a grueling laps regime around the hospital.

On November 17, 2019, Donna was released. One month later, a third tumor was discovered. This time, Donna was given chemo pills designed to target a genetic marker within the tumor itself, stabilizing the cancer. To date, the marker has been a success.

**Brain cancer has given Donna a new perspective on life, "Before surgery," she said, "life was good, but since my surgeries, every sunrise reminds me there is so much life to be had."**

Donna added this advice for others dealing with disabilities:

"It is all just life. We either learn from it and share so others learn, or we run scared our entire lives by refusing to grow." Donna lives by her words, and it is clear she is not running anywhere. She is too busy handing out smiles.



### Donna Goodale's philosophy on life!

"It is all just life. We either learn from it and share so others learn, or we run scared our entire lives by refusing to grow."

Photos: (left) Donna's post surgery and (right) Donna, as a greeter at Walgreens



## MEET THE LIFTT STAFF!



**Tanya Thomas,  
Peer Coordinator**



**Echo Dots are free to LIFTT consumers** thanks to a generous grant from the Billings Community Foundation and Amazon.

Echo Dots can help you make calls, control smart home devices, listen to music, news, jokes, weather forecasts and much more. Supply is limited, first-come-first-served, so call LIFTT today, 259-5181.

**“It’s not so bad to be special...  
you just have to learn to feel  
good about it.”  
- MacGyver**

Tanya Thomas has grit, sass, and confidence. Born with a rare potentially blinding disease caused by an abnormal development of retinal blood vessels in premature infants, Tanya has been blind in her right eye and partially blind in her left eye since birth.

Early on, Tanya developed a can-do attitude to ensure a successful life. In high school, she showed an artistic bent and studied portraiture, with her favorite subjects being athletes and actors. Several of her works hang in various private collections. Her subjects include hockey superstar, Wayne Gretzky, Cincinnati Reds’ Pete Rose, and Richard Dean Anderson, the lead actor in the TV series *MacGyver*, who accepted his portraiture from Tanya in person.

Tired of working several non-fulfilling jobs when she moved to Billings from Sheridan, Wyoming in 2007, Tanya found a job coach who led her to a career at LIFTT.

For six years now, Tanya has applied her positive outlook to instilling confidence in peers and equipping them with the skills needed to live independently. She is currently working with ten peers and hopes to help the program grow.

Independence is important to Tanya and although she sometimes gets frustrated over barriers, she has learned to go with the flow and always move forward.

Despite her disability, Tanya is resourceful. She lives on her own, pays her bills, goes to work, and contributes to the community. Even when times are tough, Tanya realizes she is better off than many. She credits LIFTT for providing her with a good dose of humility and realism that, along with a positive outlook and unflappable confidence, are the mainstays of her toolbox and a shining example for her peers. MacGyver would approve!

### Peer Support Group

*Do you need something  
to do? Are you looking  
for a way to socialize?  
Well, we have the group  
for you!*

LIFTT is hosting an online peer support group sharing our daily moves dealing with our disabilities. To access the Zoom event, you can copy the link or call in through your phone.

*Join us every  
Thursday at 3 p.m.!*

Zoom can be downloaded onto your computer, tablet or mobile phone. The software will walk you through connecting the first time you use it. If you are comfortable with this technology please join us by video. If you are uncomfortable with, or don't have computer access, please join us by phone.

### Join Zoom Meeting

[https://zoom.us/  
j/93017341646](https://zoom.us/j/93017341646)

Meeting ID: 930 1734 1646  
One tap mobile  
+13462487799,  
93017341646# US

To join by phone: 1-253-215-8782 After you hear "Welcome to Zoom" enter the meeting ID and press #

The telephone numbers are free.

**If you need technical  
support please call  
Tricia at 406-647-0126.**



## Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow

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(406) 259-5181

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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."

We are on the web @ [www.LIFTT.org](http://www.LIFTT.org)

### MonTECH Announces Major Grant

The Montana Assistive Technology Loan program (MonTECH) recently received a grant that will infuse its financial loan program with \$657,686! This program allows Montanans to apply for loans for assistive technology, mobility equipment, adaptive recreation equipment, home and vehicle modification, accessible vehicles, and hearing aids. Approved applicants can borrow up to \$1,500 at 0% interest, or up to \$50,000 at 3.5%.

Learn more here: <http://matl.ruraldynamics.org/>  
(MonTECH is part of the University of Montana's Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities. Along with Rural Dynamics, MonTECH helps people with disabilities pursue financial resources and economic opportunities. The program also provides free confidential information about assistive technology, devices, and services for disabled Montanans.

*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 Services Division).*

### Give a call (406), or email us!

LIFTT Main Number/Messaging: 259-5181

LIFTT Contact Us email form: <http://www.liftt.org/contact/>

LIFTT Fax Number: 259-5259

#### SELF DIRECT PERSONAL CARE ASSISTANT PROGRAM

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Sabine Louis, PCA Program Facilitator, 294-5208, [sabinel@liftt.org](mailto:sabinel@liftt.org)

#### INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

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#### PEER PROGRAM

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