



# LIFTT

Living Independently for Today & Tomorrow

The LIFTT Connection  
Newsletter

MARCH 2022

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2

## LIFTT Advanced Technology Designed to Better Serve Consumers



### Welcome back! LIFTT Offices Reopen

Dear readers, we hope this notice finds you safe and well during this unprecedented time. While LIFTT has been working remotely over the past few months, we are pleased to announce the reopening of both our Billings and Glendive offices.

Face to face interaction is important to LIFTT and we are lifting restrictions while taking specific measures to protect the vulnerable. We look forward to seeing you.

LIFTT Billings (406) 259-5181  
1201 Grand Ave,  
Billings, MT 59102  
Hours: 8AM – 5PM, Mon.-Th.  
8AM – 4PM, Friday

LIFTT Glendive (406) 948-8501  
100 1/2 South Merrill Ave,  
Glendive, MT 59330  
Hours: 8AM – 5PM, Mon.– Th.  
8AM – 4PM, Friday.

As the center for independent living for 18 counties in Southeastern Montana, LIFTT is committed to providing programs and services that help to empower persons with disabilities to break down the physical, bureaucratic and cultural barriers that prevent individuals from being fully independent participants in their lives and communities.

Technology is both a challenge and an opportunity for everyone, including people with disabilities. It is a challenge because sometimes it requires a great deal of mental or physical effort to be done successfully. But it also is an opportunity as it allows us to grow, communicate, and be more productive. When our offices were closed to the public, we learned that technology could be a partial alternative for in-person meetings during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

We had to expand the use of technology and find ways to preserve and grow our community through technology. We increased the use of telephones, the internet, and social media, and became regular users of a zoom platform for digital meetings. Although we are happy the Pandemic is almost over, we do not want to revert to life the way it was before COVID-19. In addition to meeting people in person, we will continue to use technology and expand its use to create a virtual and dynamic community of people that can overcome not only their disabilities but are also mastering high-tech.

During the Pandemic, LIFTT completed our ADA-accessible website. The new website launched on January 31, 2022, allowing people with all disabilities to browse and obtain information about independent living services. In early March 2022, we began a new project and are now developing an APP comprised of software that can be installed and run on a computer, tablet, smartphone, and other electronic devices. You will be able to use the APP to communicate directly with LIFTT's independent living specialists through live chat, and receive notifications that will keep you informed and updated about everything going on in our community.

LIFTT's website and APP are just the beginning of something bigger. We continue to look for innovative ideas, creative initiatives, and practical suggestions. Please help us create the future and not only imagine how technology can help us promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society but make it our reality.

You are why LIFTT is here. We want to work for you and with you. Give us a call! Send us an email. Connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.

Soon, you will be able to download LIFTT's APP and live chat with us.

## There's No Place Like Home: a LIFTT Success Story



Timothy J. is a 52-year-old male who came to LIFTT asking for help finding housing because he was homeless.

Timothy has diabetes, which, effects the ability of the body to produce or respond to the hormone insulin. Timothy is impaired, resulting in abnormal metabolism of carbohydrates and elevated glucose levels in the blood and urine.

People living with diabetes have an increased risk of lower limb amputation, wounds, or ulcers that do not heal, are the most common cause of amputation among people with this condition. Timothy's toes were amputated.

LIFTT's Independent Living Specialist **Tonnette Jensen** called a local property owner to ask about the availability of any rentals. The landlord said he had a studio apartment vacant that didn't have too many stairs so Timothy could navigate them. Timothy looked at the apartment and came to the LIFTT office the next day to complete a rental application.

Due to his situation, the proprietor waived the deposit fee. Timothy was able to move in and start fresh in a place he could finally call his own. **Home, sweet home!**



## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

We are happy to inform you that, since early February 2022, our Billings and Glendive offices have been open to the public. Once again, we welcome visitors for in-person meetings, community activities, group events, and resuming our participation in outreach events. Please feel free to stop by.

We hope to see you soon. However, LIFTT will continue to accommodate the needs of those who expect to receive services electronically and communicate via telephone and email. We are equipped and prepared to move forward as a hybrid organization.

You need to know that we are living in what is being called a transitional period. During 2022, as a society, we are moving from a pandemic [the global or national outbreak of a disease] to an endemic [when an infection is restricted to a certain location]. For this reason, LIFTT will continue to encourage our team members, consumers, and community to protect themselves against COVID-19 infection. The best way to accomplish that is by being vaccinated. Please remember that LIFTT is available to help you order COVID-19 test kits, get vaccinated, and be safe. We highly recommend you have COVID-19 tests kits available at home' and are happy to help you order them for you and your family.

We believe that thanks to the efforts of the Public Health Authorities, the US will soon be a COVID-19 free country. Until then, LIFTT's team members will continue to adapt to the virus and pass this knowledge onto you and the community of our service area.

Please allow us to remind you that if you had COVID-19, you qualify as a person who has a disability and are entitled to many services and benefits.

We invite you to partner with LIFTT and help us shape the post-COVID-19 Montana and use the lessons we learned from the pandemic to improve our independent living community and services. We are proud to be open for business again along with businesses, banks, industries, the school system, hotels, airports, sports facilities, and churches.

Come to LIFTT! Let us work together to strengthen the independent living community.

Cheers! Carlos Ramalho, Executive Director



## LIFTT Team Spotlight: Tonnette Jensen WHEN YOU ARE LOST, ASK FOR DIRECTIONS



**Meet Tonnette Jensen, a LIFTT employee whose experiences of tragedy and loneliness transformed her. Here is her story:**

For the first 18 years of her life, Tonnette grew up on Camano Island, Washington, an outdoor enthusiast's dream, where Tonnette spent her time exploring trails and

beaches, but it was not all paradise for her. Tonnette was a painfully lonely child with no friends, and parents

who often left her to raise herself. In addition, at the tender age of eight, Tonnette had to cope with both the suicide of her 16-year-old brother, and her own struggles with suicidal thoughts. "Growing up was hard for me," she said, "and I isolated myself until I could make friends." Tonnette staved off grief and loneliness by immersing herself in her families' outdoor hobbies including hunting, archery, and, because their house was five minutes away from the beach, fishing and shell hunting.

Following graduation, Tonnette, worked at various grocery stores and hotels. She found her calling when she joined Eastern Montana Industries (EMI) where she cared for consumers with mental and physical disabilities. In 2021, Tonnette and her husband were walking along a Glendive sidewalk, searching for a small store they had heard about, but could not find. Unexpectedly, Jen Hawkinson, Senior Independent Living Specialist for LIFTT Glendive, appeared, gave the couple directions, and after a brief description of LIFTT's services, suggested Tonnette apply for a job with the organization.

Two months later, Tonnette was hired as an IL Specialist with the Glendive LIFTT office.

"When I moved to Montana, I did not come out of my shell until I went to work for LIFTT." She considers her coworkers her sisters, and now refers to herself as a social butterfly. "Best of all," she said, "I am a strong

independent woman with a bright future."

Tonnette's work keeps her on her toes, and she enjoys every minute of it, "I love this job and what it stands for," she said, "and I can empathize with people who are struggling because I have several disabilities myself, including borderline personality disorder, depression, anxiety, hypothyroid condition, immune deficiency, and PTSD. Despite her challenges, Tonnette remains positive. "What inspires me is living the best life I can live, and assisting people to achieve that same goal."

Tonnette sees herself working at LIFTT for the next ten years, owning a house with her husband, and, taking some awesome' vacations.

**With her can do attitude and a healthy dose of self-esteem, chances are, this butterfly will get it all.**

### 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



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

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))

**BILLINGS OFFICE: Main: 259-5181, Fax Number: 259-5259**

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

**SELF DIRECT PERSONAL CARE ASSISTANT PROGRAM**

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**PEER PROGRAM**

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