Most of us take for granted the ordinary tasks we do each day. We don’t think twice about shopping for groceries, washing and drying our clothes, paying a telephone bill, planning a menu, or boarding a bus.

At home, we know our way around the kitchen. We turn on the oven, set the temperature and know when a cake is done. We know how to mail a letter, invite a friend in for coffee or how to mow the lawn. But these “ordinary” tasks are beyond the ken of some people who have spent much of their lives in institutions or in sheltered homes where family members have taken care of every need.

See Support on page 7
Dear Staff and Friends,

In November, I had the honor of being named a “Behavioral Health Champion” by the folks at Behavioral Health Care Magazine. In the brief interview, magazine editor Doug Edwards conducted with me for the piece, I was asked about my most memorable health care experience. I told him about my first day working in a center for people challenged by developmental disabilities in Boulder. During the course of my very first staff break, I was presented with a choice whose timing seems almost impossible. In the hallway of the facility, right outside the break room, a consumer was having an epileptic seizure on the floor.

At that exact second, one of the staff members was having a seizure in one of the offices down the hall. I won’t even bother with the freakish odds of something like this actually happening, but it did, and I had to decide whether to help the consumer or the staff member with their seizures. I ran out and helped the consumer, and called for help for the staff member.

**Code of ethics**

A doctor reading the magazine piece felt the subject of “whom to help first—the patient of the caregiver?” is a debatable one, and wrote to the editor for the next issue of the magazine, arguing that, while the code of ethics to which all caregivers subscribe to would dictate that the patient always comes first, it might be debatable. Dr. H. Steven Moffic, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral medicine and family and community medicine at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, argues that paying more attention to staff can produce more cohesion, and that we have to help ourselves first before we can help those we serve as well as we can.

He closes with “Put the well-being of the staff first and everything else good will follow.”

Now, I am happy to have this debate. I believe when someone decides that what they want to do with their life is provide support and care to people who are in desperate need of it, there are certain assumptions they are making of themselves. The first is that they are not the ones who need the level of support that they will be providing. In as many words, they are not the consumers of these services. The second is that the ethical stance of “consumer comes first” is inherent in deciding to work in this field.

So, I did respond to the doctor, and here’s what I said:

“In making his hypothetical choice, Dr. Moffic experiences the same mental tug-of-war I did when faced with the dilemma – whom to treat first in the case of the patient and the caregiver. It’s not unlike the ethical predicament of the physician ordered to treat the wounded soldier who can return to combat quicker. Practically speaking, more information might have made the decision easier. For example, knowing the severity of the seizure, that is, how life threatening it was or its organic cause, certainly would influence a decision about whom to treat first. If the staff person’s seizure were more life threatening, and we knew that, we might treat him first, as a fireman might try to rescue the person most in peril in a burning building.

In making my decision, I didn’t have that information. I followed a code of ethics that has become part of my makeup. My instinct was to treat the client first.

The National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics says “social workers’ primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of clients. In general, clients’ interests are primary.”

There are exceptions. A social worker’s responsibility to the larger
Congress delegates named ‘Achievers’

AWARE employee Lorna Stutz and consumer Dave Caldwell were featured in the Billings Gazette “Achievers” column in January for their participation in Corporate Congress.

The column noted that the two “have returned to work in Billings after participating as delegates at a corporate gathering that allowed them to sponsor and vote on ‘bills’ to improve the way their company serves consumers.”

The newspaper also reported that Stutz and Caldwell were among 23 delegates nominated by their peers in October and elected to the Congress in November and that the delegates, from AWARE offices across the state, were all non-supervisory and non-management staff, or consumers.

Other newspapers across the state ran similar items about local Corporate Congress delegates.

Advertisements congratulating and thanking the delegates also ran in every weekly and daily newspaper where delegates work.

THE ANACONDA LEADER went one better. The twice-weekly newspaper published stories and photos of AWARE Consumer of the Year Russ Carstens and Leslie York, winner of the “We Strive to the Highest Quality of Care” Award.

IN OTHER MEDIA news, Larry Noonan, AWARE CEO, was interviewed in February by the Montana Business & Technology magazine for a story in its Spring 2008 issue. Noonan spoke to writer Kris Ellis of Helena about technology in human services.

Compiled by Jim Tracy

society or specific legal obligations may, on occasion, supersede the loyalty owed clients. But those exceptions don’t apply here. In this case, my client’s interest came first.

Maintaining a consumer-first philosophy religiously is the only way to meet the needs of consumers and let caregivers know our priorities. I have found people who work in human services feel better about an administrator who keeps the consumer first, particularly if he or she is consistent in the application of that philosophy.

Back to the case in point. Although they weren’t running through my mind at the time, I could also have justifiably and in good conscience based my decision on whom to help on the same precepts medical doctors use.

According to the Principles of Medical Ethics of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, “The physician’s first professional obligation is to his patient, then to his profession. His ethical obligation to his community is the same as that of any other citizen.”

I would make the same choice again – and in fact would encourage people who work in our organization to adopt the same mentality when giving care.

The rule is, the consumer, the client, the patient, come first.

Certainly, the employee comes next in any consideration and that consideration is close to that given the consumer. I often tell employees that while consumers come first, the employee comes in a close second because we have to have quality employees providing the services we offer.

What we primarily provide to consumers are people who can help them with the challenges in their lives. Housing, offices, vehicles and all the other resources we need to provide services are secondary to having quality staff implementing plans and helping meet the needs of consumers. Achieving and maintaining the right balance is the challenge and the goal of any good administrator in human services.

It’s the mentality that should rule any business.

In their book, “Passion for Excellence – The Leadership Difference,” Tom Peters and Nancy Austin, offer this advice: “First, take exceptional care of your customers . . . via superior service and superior quality.”

In human services, too often the providers within an organization take on the role of consumers. Their needs sometimes become so important that there’s a tendency to direct resources toward them instead of toward consumers.

We try to direct our resources toward consumers and, in fact, have made it a guiding principle in our organization. That principle grew out of my experience.

As an organization, we are who we are, and have come to this point because of the fact that we do put the consumers first.

So, as spring begins to come around the corner (despite the six inches of snow this morning) and we continue to encounter new and ever-changing challenges, please remember that we are here to offer people real choice, real support, and real advocacy that comes from professionals who puts them first.

I hope this finds all of you well,
‘A good soldier’

Early Head Start director bound for Iraq

By Jim Tracy

Tom Richards left the safety of AWARE’s Early Head Start classrooms in Butte in February for one of the more dangerous places in the world.

A captain and maintenance officer in the Montana Air National Guard, Richards has been deployed along with other members of the Great Falls-based 120th Fighter Wing to Balad, Iraq.

Richards, 40, director of AWARE’s Early Head Start, said goodbye to his wife, Traci, and two children, 5-year-old Rylan, and 3-year-old Emmarie, on Sunday, Feb. 24.

“They are proud of their dad,” he said of his kids.

Though he’ll be thousands of miles from home, he plans to stay as close to his family as he can through phone calls and daily e-mail.

This will be Richard’s first tour in Iraq after a 15-year career in the Guard. To prepare for deployment, he and his fellow guardsmen have been briefed about the area where they’re headed and about what to expect when they arrive.

Of the war on terror and the mission in Iraq, Richards said, “I think we are doing good work.”

Leaving his wife and children is the worst part of active duty overseas, he said.

The best part?
“Serving my country.”
‘Sixty days in country’

The 120th Fighter Wing will deploy about 175 people from Great Falls and other bases around the country, including pilots, maintenance and operations personnel, and intelligence and supply specialists.

“They are airmen to lieutenant colonel, and their deployment will last about 60 days in country,” said Lt. Col. Garth Scott, public relations officer for the Guard.

Richards, part of an advance group of the 120th Wing, deployed on Sunday (Feb. 24).

“They were transported by a KC 135 to the Middle East at the end of the week to undergo additional training and equipment draw before traveling to Balad. Five of the F-16’s are already in theater,” Scott said.

Dubbed “Mortaritaville” by the men and women who have served there, Balad Airbase lies about

Continued on next page
40 miles north of Baghdad. The installation is the launching point for Air Force F-16 fighters – the planes the 120th specializes in servicing.

Balad is in a strategic location for Air Force missions in support of combat operations into Baghdad, according to the web site Global Security.

“F-16’s are close enough to Baghdad that by the time they put their gear up they are in the combat zone,” the site says. “If the base takes mortar fire fighter pilots are able to quickly bombard insurgents just a couple of miles from the runway. They also can streak to anywhere over Iraq’s 227,000 square miles in about 15 minutes, refueled by airborne tankers and propelled by an engine that produces an earth-shaking 24,000 pounds of thrust.”

While Richards and his crew are helping keep those jets in the air, assistant director and child development specialist Christina Barto of Dillon will serve as Early Head Start director.

Mike Kelly, director of children’s services and intensive family education support services, will manage administration of the program.

AWARE is covering Richard’s position under a policy that grants leaves of absence for military or reserve duty.

His deployment falls under the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA), which prohibits discrimination against persons because of their service in the Armed Forces Reserve, the National Guard, or other uniformed services, said Leighanne Fogerty, AWARE human resources specialist.

Protecting benefits

“USERRA prohibits an employer from denying any benefit of employment on the basis of an individual’s membership, application for membership, performance of service, application for service, or obligation for service in the uniformed services,” Fogerty said. “It also protects the right of veterans, reservists, National Guard members, and certain other members of the uniformed services to reclaim their civilian employment after being absent due to military service or training.”

Richards completed officer See Duty on page 15

W atching how Tom performs his job at AWARE, you can see why he’s such a good soldier. — AWARE CEO Larry Noonan.
Don’t want to work until you’re 80? Then you should consider saving for retirement in the AWARE 401(k) plan, says Chief Financial Officer Geri Wyant.

Here’s why:
You may save painlessly through payroll deductions.
You will get a 25 percent match on every dollar you put in up to 16 percent of your gross pay (e.g., you put in 16 percent, AWARE puts in 4 percent).
You save taxes on every dollar you contribute (in other words, you put the IRS’s money in your retirement account!).

AWARE has some of the best investment choices available anywhere.

This year is and will be a wonderful opportunity to invest in the stock and bond markets because investments are “on sale” right now.
Remember the basic rule: “10-10-30.” It’s not a phone card. It’s a way to retire at full pay.
Save 10 percent of your gross earnings (your contribution plus the AWARE match).
Earn 10 percent on your savings (use the Morningstar Model Portfolios).
Do this for 30 years and you will retire at full pay and never run out of money.
If you can’t save 8 percent of your gross earnings right now (to get the AWARE 2 percent match and meet your 10-10-30), don’t worry, says Elizabeth Harris, founder and owner of Intermountain Financial Group Montana, the Bozeman-based firm that has managed AWARE’s retirement plan for the past 10 years.

The financial advisory company specializes in retirement plans, primarily for businesses. Among its other Montana clients are McKenzie River Pizza, Universal Athletic Stores, Thriftway Conoco, Quality Supply and Murdoch’s, to name a few.

Harris’ advice to employees is to “save as much as you can and send a small part of each raise or bonus to your 401(k).”

“Try saving 3 percent, because for hourly employees, your check will vary so much from one pay period to the next that you’ll never know the money is missing,” she says. “Look at what saving 3 percent of pay for only 10 years will do for a 25-year-old person earning $10 an hour compared with that same person starting at age 45 and saving the same amount for the next 20 years. Anything you save is better than anything you don’t save.”

If you’ve been with AWARE for at least six months and want to begin saving, call or e-mail Kelsie for enrollment forms. If you have questions about saving and investing, call or e-mail Elizabeth. They may be reached at 1-800-888-4068 or emharris@finsvcs.com.

About 30 percent, or 161 of the 504 eligible employees, have signed up for AWARE’s 401k plan so far.

Day Activity Center director hired

Over the course of what has been a long winter, AWARE is putting the finishing touches on a new Day Activity Center in Butte.

Serving as its Day Service coordinator is Robin Folkvord, who served as program manager for the “Farm in the Dell,” a program serving eight individuals residentially, and 12 more who were enrolled in the day service aspect of the project.

She and her husband, Darrel, lived in Helena where, in addition to her program manager role, they owned a Wheat Montana franchise.

Robin is “excited to put together a program that has the potential to bring enjoyment to people’s days,” and is eager to see the improvements this new building will bring to the daily life and schedules of the people we serve.

By Tim Pray

“Pessimism is, in brief, playing the sure game. You cannot lose at it; you may gain. It is the only view of life in which you can never be disappointed. Having reckoned what to do in the worst possible circumstances, when better arise, as they may, life becomes child’s play.” — Thomas Hardy (British Novelist and Poet who set much of his work in Wessex, an imaginary county in southwestern England. 1840-1928)
Support...

For some people affected by developmental disabilities, ordinary day-to-day activities and chores must be learned.

Through Adult Supported Living Services, AWARE is helping more than a dozen men and women in Anaconda and Butte learn those skills so they can live full and independent lives in the community.

Independence means living in their own homes or apartments, working at their own jobs, enjoying their own hobbies and activities and even driving their own vehicles in some cases.

Helping consumers achieve self-sufficiency in Anaconda and Butte are supported living technicians Carol Wind, Stacey LaForge, and Jessica Ocaña.

“I love doing this job,” Wind said on a recent afternoon while helping Tony Shea fold trousers in the laundry room at Hearthstone, the apartment complex in Anaconda where he has lived for the past 10 years. Shea is one of a half-dozen people Wind sees during the week.

She started part-time as a support tech in 2000 while still working at a local supermarket bakery. After a few months “with my consumers,” she gave up her baker’s apron for a full-time position at AWARE.

“Flu shots and checkups

Wind makes sure, for example, that the people she works with get their flu shots, semi-annual dental checkups and that they keep appointments with the eye doctor. For a few she tracks prescriptions, reminding them on occasion to use an asthma nebulizer or to take a blood pressure pill.

A typical week includes driving to the grocery store, paying bills, and cleaning house. Thursday is laundry day, either at home or at a laundromat in Anaconda or Butte.

Variety is what appeals to Stacey LaForge, a supported living tech for AWARE since 1999.

“Oh, good Lord, what don’t we do?” LaForge asked in response to a question about her daily routine.

Support continued on page 9
The Gift Horse

By Dr. Ira Lourie

Most of us know the old adage, “Don’t look a gift horse in the mouth,” which is derived from the practice of checking a horse’s mouth as one measure of its health before one buys it.

The saying warns us that when we get a gift, we should accept it with gratitude regardless of its condition or monetary value. A few months ago I received a gift. One of the AWARE case managers, Stacey Hughes, sent me a package. As I unwrapped it, I found a note saying that I might find this fun and under the note I found a nice looking stainless steel travel mug. My first reaction was to question what I had done for Stacey that would have led her to send me such a nice gift, and secondarily I wondered, while this seemed like a really nice gift, what the “fun” was going to be. Then I picked up the mug and when one side read, “Texas NeuroRehab Center,” and the other side read, “The Oaks Treatment Center,” I finally got the joke. If you read the last several ShrinkwRap articles, my ongoing theme has been, “Just Say No To Texas.” Stacey saw the irony in sending me a gift from just those residential placements to which I have been preaching about saying “No!”

But this is more than a cute story about a shrink and his gift. The point I want to make is based on the question, “Why does a place in Texas send nice travel mugs to folks in Montana?” Of course the answer is probably advertising...or maybe a bribe...or worse yet, a reward for sending them lots of kids. So the next question is, “Should we just accept the gift without looking deeper into its meaning?” I think the answer is “No” and that maybe the gift horse adage shouldn’t really work here. It is important for us to realize that the residential placement agencies are selling us a bill of goods. The gift they are offering us is really not a mug. Rather, they are telling us that they have “the answer” to our problem of what to do for kids about whom we are stumped. They tell us they have a special program for this child, but when we look into what they are doing for the child, it usually looks pretty similar to what they are doing or have done for all the other children we have sent there. More importantly, when they are “finished” with the child, not much if anything has been done to prepare the family or the community for the child’s return. It seems like they never even have any suggestions as to what worked so well in the institution that we might try back at home.

We at AWARE now have a growing experience with our Out Of State Placement Staffings, or OOPS meetings, in which we work together to come up with community-based solutions for kids who are at risk for or are coming back from institutional placement, whether in state or out. In these meetings it is becoming clear that the real problem is not figuring out what services we need to provide in order to help the kids and families we are working with avoid institutional placement; we are actually pretty good at doing this. No, the real problem is getting those solutions paid for.

I’m sad to say that the major barrier most families face in getting the proper care is the lack of funding; this is especially true for those families whose children do not come under the mandate of either Social or Juvenile Services. Some help is available from the KMAs in finding funding for these children, however, if they ever funded the community-based services necessary for keeping all the children presented to them out of institutional care, the available funds would quickly dry up. Of course, the reason there aren’t enough funds for community-based services is that all the money keeps going into residential programs.

We see our job at AWARE as trying to break this vicious cycle. We are doing this through our commitment to our Unconditional Care Commission.

Continued on next page
Support...

“For the most part, my job is helping others improve their lives,” she said. “It makes you feel good to be able to do that.”

Besides helping consumers manage day-to-day chores in Butte and Anaconda, LaForge also serves as job coach.

Coaching success

Among her coaching successes is Joe Gibson, who works 22 hours a week cleaning St. Patrick’s, St. Joseph’s and Immaculate Conception churches in Butte, a job he landed after getting a tip on an opening from Knute Oaas, AWARE’s behavioral services coordinator.

“Joe has a lot of ambition and wanted a job on his own,” LaForge said.

She helped him navigate through the application and interviews and continues to help him learn the job.

“He shines at it,” LaForge said.

His employer, the Rev. Bob Hall, agrees.

“He seems to be doing a very fine job,” Hall told AWARE Ink.

LaForge also works on more day-to-day concerns.

She may offer a gentle reminder to “comb your hair and brush your teeth” before leaving for work in the morning or she may help with something as complicated as getting a driver’s license.

Among the people studying for a driver’s license is Robert Gomez of Anaconda, who also gets tutoring from Ocaña. Gomez, and two other people AWARE works with in Anaconda have been using a special edition of the Montana Driver’s Manual to prepare for the exam.

“It has bigger print, simpler language and more illustrations and pictures,” Ocaña said.

She started as a support services technician last fall after working for several years in a local group home.

“I like the fact that I’m helping people to live on their own,” she said

For the most part, Wind, LaForge and Ocaña work with consumers only during the week, limiting their involvement on weekends.

“Every once in a while they’ll call on the weekend when something comes up,” said Wind. “If they get hurt or get sick, there is always someone here they can call.”

Their consumers also have case managers, who work for Helena Industries in Anaconda and Butte. State regulations prohibit a company that provides support services to people affected by developmental disabilities from also providing case management, hence the involvement of two separate agencies.

“We work very well with the Helena Industries case managers,” said Donna Kelly, supported living coordinator. “If there’s a concern with a client, we normally contact Helena Industries or they contact us.”

‘Emphasis on the personal’

Kelly and the supported living techs also meet with Helena Industries case managers and other advocates when discussing a client’s personal support plan, or “PSP” in the language of human services.

The emphasis is on the personal, Kelly said.

“The services we provide are based on an individual’s strengths, needs, and preferences, not on any preconceived notion,” she said.

“It’s all individual,” said Wind. “We go through an assessment to see what they know and where they may need help. A plan is set up to help them become as independent as they can because that’s everyone’s goal. I don’t want to do anything for these guys that they can do on their own.”

AWARE is just one of 30 non-profit corporations across Montana that provide supported living services to more than 3,500 people under contract with the state’s Developmental Disabilities Program. Residential Services are provided to more than 1,200 individuals.

Dr. Ira Lourie serves as Medical Director to AWARE, Inc. He is the author of Everything is Normal Until Proven Otherwise. He lives in Hagerstown, Maryland.


**Room for privacy**

AWARE Missoula services moving in April

By Tim Pray

The services of AWARE in Missoula will be moving into a new home this April.

The Youth Case Management, Psychiatric, Outpatient, Targeted Adult Case Management, Therapeutic Family Care, as well as the support needs for both Youth Group Homes and the Comprehensive School and Community-based Treatment Services will have space that provides ample room for privacy and office storage needs.

During the course of the last year, AWARE’s expansion of services made it apparent that the current office space on Higgins Street would not provide enough room for all the employees and services who needed the office space.

“One on any given day, you may have dozens of individuals coming in and out of the office in order to utilize the services we offer,” says Jaci Noonan, director of the Targeted Adult Case Management program.

“We needed additional space that is not only professional and welcoming, but awarded us sufficient room to efficiently complete the work we need to do to serve our individuals and we think that’s what this space will give us.”

The new building is located at 2300 Regent St. in Missoula, very near the county fairgrounds.

Jim Pelger of Rattlesnake Properties, LLC, has worked diligently with AWARE to fully customize the space into an accessible and modern one.

Some of the features of the new office include: a conference and training area, an activities room, a lockable and spacious file storage room, an inviting reception area, and readily available parking. Modern and aesthetically pleasing color schemes, art, and furniture will add stability and warmth to the new environment.

Each individual service will benefit from the added space and comfort.

Dr. Alan Reyes, the AWARE staff psychiatrist working in Missoula, is eager to call the new office home.

"Clients will have an even better place to be able to come in, work together, and feel comfortable and valued,” Reyes said. “Physical space is very important when working with folks who need mental health attention. In seeing children, you need enough room to conduct play therapy and not make them feel as though they are being pushed into a corner.”

Reyes adds, “We can now comfortably work with multiple patients at once...if I need to meet with a family and have a therapeutic discussion, I can, and that family element is obviously core to AWARE’s philosophies.”

With its new central location, the building is designed to be a true destination for those in the area—including those commuting from the Bitterroot Valley—who look to AWARE for their mental health and disability support.

Jaci Noonan adds, “This new space is the culmination and representation of the hard work AWARE staff have poured into this community’s services.” She continues, “They have been eager to offer those services from a place that both staff and those we serve are really proud of...this is that place.”

Clients will have an even better place to be able to come in, work together, and feel comfortable and valued.

— Dr. Alan Reyes
AWARE handbook emphasizes training
Revisions in effect as of Feb. 18

A year in the making, AWARE’s revised Employee Handbook has been posted on the “intranet” web site.

“The management team took about a year to gather feedback from staff, review policies and answer questions,” said Leighanne Fogerty, human resources specialist. “The new handbook is the result of that intense work.”

The revised version of the manual went into effect Feb. 18 and was posted on the web site the same day.

Fogerty said most employees have signed the “Acknowledgement Form” verifying that they understand the policies it enumerates. A few have yet to sign the form. Anyone who has questions about the handbook or the form may contact Fogerty at lfogerty@aware-inc.org or by phone at 563-8117, ext. 19.

Fogerty said she and CEO Larry Noonan wanted to highlight a revision in the mandatory training policy they believe is critical to AWARE’s Unconditional Care Philosophy.

Under the revised policy, all direct-care employees, including technicians, night watch, program managers, and case managers, must have current training certifications to continue working.

“In other words, if an employee allows a training certification to expire, he or she may immediately be suspended without pay and not allowed to return to work until the certification is current,” Fogerty said.

People who are unsure whether their training certifications are current should ask their supervisors for assistance.

“If you need to attend a training session in order to update a certification, please work with your supervisor to schedule your ability to attend the needed session,” Fogerty said.

All required training certifications must be current by March 31, 2008, to avoid, or risk, suspension without pay.

By Jim Tracy

Just the Facts

- More than 16,000 Montanans — two out of every 100 people — are affected by a developmental disability.
- The state of Montana generally serves about 4,000 people affected by developmental disabilities and has slightly fewer than 500 awaiting services.

This is a sample of an inside (lower level) page on AWARE's new web site.

New web site design, navigation selected

AWARE’s new web site will convey a businesslike but friendly attitude. That was the consensus of managers and staff who reviewed page examples prepared by Jane Devon of Anaconda (www.janedevon.com), who has been overhauling the site since last December.

Devon created four home page examples that included various color, navigation and organization designs.

The most popular design will include a “Flash” page with rotating stories and photos highlighting corporation news and exemplifying AWARE services and 10 Principles of Unconditional Care.

Besides a fresh look, the site also will have a more logical organization.

Devon, whose clients include big companies like Mazda Corp. and Pottery Barn and smaller enterprises close to home like Fairmont Hot Springs Resort and now AWARE, is filling the site with content. That will include descriptions and photos of AWARE services plus contacts, staff and board directories, an illustrated history of the corporation, links to other providers, services and partners, media “room,” job page, and other features. Altogether, the site will have about 40 pages.

Once content has been added, Devon will turn over the site to programmers. It should be ready to launch no later than mid-April.

“The new web site will help us improve communications within AWARE and make it easier for consumers, potential employees, donors and others to learn about the corporation and access our services,” said CEO Larry Noonan.

By Jim Tracy
AWARE transportation center is Mac’s ‘hobby’

By Tim Pray

In 1988, the country was in the midst of a presidential election, Soviet troops began their withdrawal from Afghanistan, the California Raisins hit No. 84 on the pop charts with their version of “I Heard it Through the Grapevine,” “Roseanne” premiered on ABC, and C.R. “Mac” McDougall, now 81, began working for AWARE.

He began as a part time bus driver, working in and around the Butte area. From that point on, his roles snowballed into performing the maintenance for virtually every aspect of AWARE’s operations.

For an organization trying to grow, as AWARE certainly was, innumerable random and emergency assignments came up.

“There were so many,” says Mac, “There was one time I got a call from Larry (Noonan, AWARE CEO), and he asked me to find a wrecker and arrange for it to head down to Lewis and Clark Caverns. So, I show up there and there’s two AWARE vans sitting there from Great Falls, and one of them doesn’t have a transmission. So, we got ’em loaded up and headed over to Butte, arranged for transportation for the kids, and got ’em back home that night.”

In the early ’90s, he recalls, AWARE was just getting into the group home projects in Butte, and he won the “Employee of the Year” award for his work in getting them off the ground.

“I handled every part of them,” he says. “I just went right to work for them, and a lot of it was negotiating with the contractors.

“When you move in with kids, you’re going to run into issues that you hadn’t thought of before.”

By the time most people reach their 60s, they’re planning their retirement. That was not—and is not—the case with Mac. In addition to his 20 years of work with AWARE, he has spent over 50 years working on the railroad, owning and operating an ice company, a machine shop, and serving in the Navy, who awarded him the Naval Achievement Medal for his work as master chief of command at the recruitment training center in Butte.

See Mac on page 15

McDougall Center

The C.R. McDougall Transportation Center, 2203 Pine St. in Butte, was built in 2006. The facility houses AWARE’s transportation service and maintenance workshop. AWARE photo
Each issue of AWARE Ink includes a collection of books, articles, documents, texts, and even movies recommended by staff, covering a range of topics related to the work we do.

This issue features titles suggested by Gale Evans of Helena, AWARE’s youth case management supervisor:

After attending the recent presentation of The Explosive Child by Dr. Len Lantz and Shawna Steppe in Anaconda, I was thinking of how attaining successful parenting and supervisory skills have a lot in common. The parenting approaches demonstrated were: Plan A is where the adult dictates and demands the desired behavior. Plan B involves interactions of both the adult and the child to produce the most wanted behavior.

Plan C is after the child is already having a melt down/temper tantrum and it is too late to have any successful interventions or change behaviors. I think the parallels are evident and unless supervisors are able to engage their employees, it is seldom a successful journey.

Looking back over my 20 years of supervision, I have found a few books that have been helpful in all areas of management and easy to execute with a great deal of success. As most books on managing people, they pretty much support Plan B.

Who Moved My Cheese?
By Spencer Johnson, M.D.

Who Moved My Cheese? is an easy-to-read book that has been making its rounds in the management field for many years, but it continues to provide relevant information about the changes we face in today’s job market. The simple parable features four (employees) mice: Sniff, who sniffs out changes early, Scurry, who scurries into action, Hem who denies and resists the changes he fears will lead to something worse and Haw, who learns to adapt in time to see changes lead to something better. The moral of the book is that if you don’t change, you will become extinct. This is an excellent read for new employees. I have used it successfully in the past for supervisory and staff meetings. It is extremely beneficial to agencies undergoing organizational changes.

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team
By Patrick Lencioni

This book describes an organization that has to undergo major changes in today’s competitive market to become successful. The author identifies five major dysfunctions of a corporation that staff must overcome to be successful. The dysfunctions are 1) The Absence of Trust, 2) Fear of Conflict, 3) Lack of Communication, 4) Avoidance of Accountability and 5) Inattention to Results.

It’s a quick read and offers practical solutions of how teams can be built on emphasizing these five methods to benefit the organization and improve the bottom line.

It offers clearly defined steps that can be used to recognize these hurdles and build a cohesive and effective team. Once again, the key is that all management and employees are on the same page and committed to change.

Fish
By Stephen Lundin, Harry Paul and John Christensen

This parable challenges us to imagine a workplace where everyone chooses to bring energy, passion and a positive attitude to the job everyday, an environment where people are truly connected to their work, their colleagues and their customers. It addresses relevant issues, including employee retention and burnout. I feel it has many excellent examples of how to achieve the above, but can also delude the reader into thinking all employees desire the same results as the employer. In truth, the employee does not always have the same goals as management, but it does contain some great examples of how to boost morale and improve the bottom line.

Here’s depressing news

Montana ranks 32nd among the 50 states in depression status of its citizens, according to Mental Health America.

An MHA report titled “Ranking the States: An Analysis of Depression Across the States” analyzed depression across the country and found that South Dakota was the healthiest state with respect to depression status.

Mental Health America and Thomson Healthcare looked at data from 2002-2006. They compared depression levels and suicide rates in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and used the information to highlight solutions to improve states’ mental health status.

Among adults in South Dakota, 7.31 percent had a major depressive episode in the past year (2006) and 11.16 percent experienced serious psychological distress. Among adolescents in South Dakota, 7.4 percent had a major depressive episode in the past year. On average, individuals in South Dakota reported having 2.41 poor mental health days in the past 30 days. On the other hand, over 9 percent of Montanans had a major depressive episode over the study period.

Depression is a chronic illness that takes a heavy toll on America’s health and productivity. It affects more than 21 million American children and adults annually and is the leading cause of disability in the United States for people 15 to 44.

The MHA report is available at: http://mentalhealthamerica.net/go/state-ranking.

By Jim Tracy
A colleague and I recently attended a four-hour seminar in Butte. We showed up as instructed at eight o’clock, and, aside from the girl who was arranging chairs and putting balloons on the table tops, were the only ones there. So, we found the hotel’s dining room and each grabbed a few random items from their buffet; a little mound of scrambled eggs, an English muffin, a scoop of peanut butter. We talked for a while about some of the projects that he and I have in common, and, having both been fairly wrapped up in separate things lately, it was good to catch up. We finished eating, had a few more cups of coffee, talked about the presidential race, paid, and walked back to the ballroom with low ceilings.

We got back to the ballroom, and the people organizing the seminar were setting up their registration table with more balloons, some pens, and a ledger. The man whose picture appeared in the paper a few weeks earlier in a promotion for this thing was standing in the doorway, waiting for people to start arriving, which they weren’t. When we passed the guy, we each introduced ourselves, and he did the same.

“What kind of business do you run?” he asked. “Um…” I quickly thought back to an Amway revival convention that I was dragged to when I was 15 or 16 years old. “We both work for a human service-based nonprofit.” “Well you’ve got the hardest job of all,” he replied. What did that mean?

We sat in the front row, waiting for the thing to start, and could tell that the host—the guy who we met at the door and recognized from the ad—was wondering where everyone was. About five people were peppered around the tables, and there was room for 100. As the room became more and more awkward—I could hear the host saying “they’ll show up soon…”—I found myself staring at moisture stains on the ceiling, wondering how long they’d been there and whether buckets and pans had ever been placed on the floor under them.

‘What kind of business do you run?’

More people showed up than I had thought would. As they entered the room, the speaker was extending the same greeting that my colleague and I had received; “What kind of business do you run?”

When enough people were at their seats, he began. “Marketing 101: What Works, What Doesn’t, and Why.”

This was to be the title of his presentation to us, a roomful of muffler shop owners, real estate brokers, graphic designers, and me—a guy from a human services organization. During the course of the seminar, he was going to teach us about proven budget busters, how to relate to the public through advertising, and psychologically proven ways to understand the American public.

I couldn’t find the little nooks and niches that would allow for an organization such as ours to stake claim to. First of all, we provide upwards of 20 different services to a variety of different groups of people. In many cases, people wind up receiving services from AWARE because of dark situations such as abuse, neglect, entire lives spent within the walls of an institution, complete and utter misunderstanding on the part of the general public, and lack of access to services that could have and would have helped to prevent crisis. How do you market to that?

Three words

One of the exercises instructed us to each, for our respective businesses, think of three words that we strive towards and want the public to immediately associate us with. The thought was that a business can “own” a word. For instance, “McDonalds,” the speaker said, “has completely cornered the word ‘fast.’”

What word or words have we cornered? Are there any that have the ability to weave through each service we provide?

The realist in me knows that marketing the work that we do makes perfect business sense. We do, in fact, have services for people, and those people have a choice in who will provide them. It infuriated me in college when a friend or classmate would say something like “When are we going to realize that we need to close all the army bases and turn them into soup kitchens?”

That level of idealism has always seemed so off the mark to me, and represented a complete misunderstanding of the way the world works. Too often, there is an assumption that, the moment you become involved with a nonprofit agency, you must adopt language similar to what I witnessed in college. On the other hand, the thought of picking apart everything we do here and finding ways to “sell” it to the public doesn’t seem to fit, and seems entirely too distant considering the depth of the relationships that exist between staff and client.

In between uber-idealistic messages like “Growing Roots in the Soils of Humanity” and those that sound Orwellian like “We’re AWARE, Guaranteeing that You’ll be at Least 68 percent Happier with Your Situation with Our Help,” there is a message that is—and has been—

See Motto on page 15
Mac...

In November 2007, AWARE’s transportation facility was dedicated to Mac at a surprise ceremony/open house that included the majority of his enormous family, AWARE staff, and friends of the McDougall family.

“I was surprised,” he says, “I knew something was going down, because I know everything that goes on at AWARE, but it was really nice and I was really honored.”

The C.R. McDougall Transportation Center, located 2203 Pine Street in Butte, was built in 2006, and houses the transportation service and Butte’s maintenance workshop, where Mac still drops in to work.

When he goes to work now, it’s with Bob Taylor, in charge of juggling the maintenance needs in Butte and beyond.

Motto...

sitting right under everyone’s nose. The message lets people know that we know what we’re doing, we’re good at it, we enjoy doing it, and we’ll get dirty while doing it.

We got out of the seminar at about lunch time, and both quickly jumped right back to answering phone calls, returning e-mails, and working on things that had been left unfinished from the day before. It was worth it, to an extent, if only to compare the work that we do with that of a different sort of business. There are similarities in the ways that we all want the public to view what we’re doing, and it should be that way. We’re proud of what we do and feel that we can do it better than most, the same message that a tire store wants to get out to the masses.

This won’t ever be the kind of business that puts coupons in the paper, and each service we offer will probably never own a word. Our motto “The Right Services, to the Right People, at the Right Time” has taken on more depth since the first time I read it, before I worked here. It means that, for each person requiring attention, time will be taken to ensure that what they are getting is truly what they need.

Duty...

candidate school at the Montana Military Academy in 1994, two years after joining the National Guard. He earned a bachelor’s degree in elementary education the same year.

He was hired as director of AWARE’s Early Head Start in 2001.

“Tom’s program is tied to a huge national system,” said AWARE CEO Larry Noonan. “Tom has always been incredibly effective at dealing with that system. Watching how he performs his job at AWARE you can see why he’s such a good soldier.”

“We’re proud of him and all AWARE employees who serve,” Noonan added.

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“We don’t say you don’t have enough time. You have exactly the same number of hours per day that were given to Helen Keller, Pasteur, Michaelangelo, Mother Teresa, Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Jefferson, and Albert Einstein.” — H. Jackson Brown, Jr. (American best selling writer, author of Life’s Little Instruction Book)
‘Transformed system’

Mental health study raises questions

By Jim Tracy

Whether you’re getting services or delivering them, most people who deal with Montana’s mental health system believe it’s broken.

In a 2006 report titled “Grading the States,” the National Alliance on Mental Illness gave Montana an overall grade of F. The state received failing grades in infrastructure, services, and recovery supports, and got a D- in access to information.

Recommendations to remedy the more urgent shortcomings included adding more beds in hospitals and crisis units (not jails), establishing crisis intervention teams and jail diversion programs, greater access for Native Americans and boosting pay for providers.

Not all mental health professionals accepted the findings, yet most agreed they pointed to problems.

In the two years since the report was published, Montana has made progress, but it hasn’t been enough, according to a report prepared by Susan Byorth Fox, executive director of Montana’s Legislative Services Division.

Eight-month study

As the state looks for ways to make more and lasting improvements, Fox said, it has commissioned a Massachusetts firm to study Montana’s mental health system.

Over the next eight months, DMA Health Strategies, based in Lexington, Mass., will identify ways in which Montana’s publicly funded mental health services could be better integrated or coordinated to serve children and adults with mental health needs.

The study will be paid for with a $200,000 appropriation from the 2007 Legislature.

Staff developed a request for proposals, or RFP, with a small group of state employees and others involved with interagency mental health policy. The RFP was approved by the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee. DMA Health Strategies was the successful bidder.

Fox’s group first identified what it believes is missing in Montana’s public mental health system based on goals outlined by President Bush’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health.

That commission pinpointed three main obstacles that have prevented Americans with mental illnesses from getting the care they deserve: the stigma that surrounds mental illnesses, unfair treatment limitations and financial requirements placed on mental health benefits in private health insurance, and the fragmented mental health service delivery system.

Montana faces the same challenges, Fox said.

Legislative Committee members endorsed the RFP that incorporated the goals identified in the New Freedom Commission Report and believe that they can help guide the recommendations for the provision of public mental health services in Montana, Fox said.

The goals in a “transformed mental health system” include:

1. Americans understand that mental health is essential to overall health
2. Mental health care is consumer and family driven
3. Disparities in mental health services are eliminated
4. Daily mental health screening, assessment, and referral to services are common practice
5. Excellent mental health care is delivered and research is accelerated
6. Technology is used to access mental health care and information

There is no certainty

“There has been no systematic study of the extent of mental health needs and the capacity of the current mental health providers to serve the needs in the state, so there is no certainty that the state and local government dollars are being used in the most effective programs or in a systematic way,” Fox said. “There is no certainty that the services that are being purchased have measurable treatment outcomes or use evidence-based practices.”

The sponsor of the appropriation, Sen. Dan Weinberg (D-Whitefish), with the backing of Gov. Brian Schweitzer, believes the study could save Montana money or help find additional dollars, Fox said.

“Sen. Weinberg believes there are pots of money out there that we’re not getting,” she said.

Fox said the study has been put on a fast track in order to finish it in time for the 2009 Legislature.

Michael O’Neil, AWARE program officer, expressed cautious optimism

Continued on next page
that the legislative study supported by the governor could bring about “real, positive change.”

“Over the past five years, we have strongly promoted the New Freedom Report’s two fundamental principles in successfully transforming the mental health system as the basis for change here in Montana: services and treatment being consumer centered, giving them meaningful choices about treatment options, and providers— not simply oriented to the needs of bureaucracies and providers; and second, care focusing on increasing consumer’s ability to successfully cope with life challenges not just managing symptoms,” O’Neil said.

“We have repeatedly supported efforts to accurately quantify the level of need for mental health services, and to account for how funds are actually spent, and what is the true outcome on people’s lives and on communities.”

Unfortunately, O’Neil contended, AMDD has consistently in public and private strongly rejected and distorted these efforts.

“I believe with the governor, the legislature and DPHHS Director Joan Miles providing the critical transformational leadership Montana can create a mental health system that will improve the lives of thousands of Montanans,” he said.

Barbara Mueske, AWARE’s adult mental health group service administrator, also commented on the study.

“When Montana received its grades of F and D- and it was discussed at the Admissions, Discharge and Review Team meeting at Montana State Hospital (a group of community providers from every community mental health center in the state that meets every other month) the comment was, ‘We’re not perfect but we’re not the only state with failing grades’ rather than ‘What are we failing to do and why is the system failing?’” Mueske said.

“This is an indicator that speaks to the first obstacle, which is stigma. If the providers in the system view a failing grade as ‘We are not the only state’ then we know it is not about viewing the people served by the system as ‘deserving’ a better system.”

According to Mueske, the state continues to spend money on mental health in the adult system for the highest-end services, primarily focusing on the census at the state hospital at Warm Springs.

“Prevention is rarely, if ever, discussed,” she said. “The Legislature continues to appropriate more funding and more, and more funding is funneled into the state hospital and not into community services.”

She cited as an example the $4.1 million appropriated to the Addictive and Mental Disorders Division for “72-hour crises services, including presumptive eligibility and tele-psychiatry.”

Local providers overlooked

“AMDD looked to out-of-state providers in California to provide the tele-psychiatry before looking to capable instate providers,” Mueske said. “The out-of-state group was not able to provide the service in the time-frame that AMDD wanted and needed, and rather than selecting a community provider who has the knowledge and skills to provide the service, they made a decision to put the money into the state hospital where four new psychiatrists are being recruited.”

She said that eliminates four psychiatry positions from communities “that are desperate for psychiatry, where people wait for months to see a psychiatrist, resulting in their need to leave their own communities to travel to the remote state hospital and receive the highest end services.”

Mueske believes data about the publicly funded mental health system should be immediately available from AMDD, the agency in charge of administering the funding.

Measuring outcomes

“They should instantly know the gaps in the services,” she said. “The study should first evaluate the inability of the administrator of the public mental health funds to identify whether the funds are being used in the most effective way and why they have no effective measurable treatment outcome data.”

Mueske said AWARE developed its Intensive Community Based Rehabilitation service in response to the gap in services for older individuals with mental illness who also have a greater need for nursing care services.

“The program has served individuals who have had “many, many failed placements in their lives,” she said.

“The people were identified by the state as the most difficult to serve and sent out a request for proposals.”

AWARE submitted a comprehensive response and set up homes for the service in Butte, Great Falls, Glendive and Missoula. Another home is operated by a separate company in Billings. Subsequently, AMDD re-thought the effort, and support for the program waned, leading to the closure of the Missoula home and 16 other community living opportunities. More recently with the state hospital bursting at the seams

See Mental Health on page 18
The Best 100? People served by adult case management

By Barbara Mueske

The Best 100! The best 100 what—or who, you ask? The best dressed? The best cities in the nation? The best songs? Plainly, no.

These are the best served 100 people in this state of Montana. The people receiving Adult Case Management services from AWARE, Inc. That said, following are the top 10 reasons that people receiving these services have been deemed “best served,” from 10 down to the number one reason.

10. There is no waiting for Adult Case Management services after having been referred to AWARE. The average wait at other mental health centers in the state for the same service lasts for approximately six weeks. People's problems have a way of compounding quickly, and within that six week period, they are often forced into requiring a higher level of care. Further, they may have to leave the community they know and live in, along with the people who love and care for them, thus abandoning their entire support network.

9. AWARE Case Managers provide service as often as the strength-based plan indicates. Some people are seen daily, and some more often—if necessary. People who receive services from other mental health centers lament that they rarely—if ever—see their case manager.

8. Case Managers who work at AWARE link the people they work with to services throughout the community so that they are fully integrated into the place in which they live. AWARE prides itself on assisting people in finding employment, education, or accessing transportation. AWARE does not implement day treatment programs in which individuals spend their time in a vacuum-like artificial environment. Full integration into people’s natural environment is the goal…at all times.

7. Every person receiving AWARE’s Adult Case Management services directs his or her own service with a strength-based plan. This plan is developed by the person who is to receive services, along with the most important people in his or her life. The plan doesn’t focus on the person’s limitations, but rather on what he or she would like to accomplish.

6. AWARE very rarely admits people to the Montana State Hospital. In 2007, no AWARE clients were referred there. AWARE wraps services around the clients, so that they may remain in their own communities.

5. The review of the strength-based treatment plan is a celebration of the person’s successes, focusing on the person’s wishes and dreams. Traditionally, the review of the plan by other providers has focused only on limitations and roadblocks to goals…not successes.

4. Clients of AWARE do not have to wait months for evaluation by a psychiatrist after they enter the Case Management services. AWARE feels strongly that it is of the utmost importance to gain the insight of a mental health professional immediately, adding a valuable dimension to the whole picture. Clients in other services can wait from between six months to two years for this evaluation.

3. AWARE Case Managers consistently advocate to other agencies who do not focus on people’s strengths on behalf of those affected by mental health issues. AWARE focuses on what people can do and not what they cannot. There is no better way to work on eliminating stigma issues faced by this population.

2. The doors at the AWARE Case Management offices are always open to clients. AWARE feels as though this is an important—if not simple—way to demonstrate that the staff remain a part of this team of success, not just eight to five.

1. AWARE case managers are educated in, and practice 10 Principles of Unconditional Care. They readily accept that AWARE, as an organization, is eager to face the toughest challenges, that its strength-based approach is the best way to work with people, and that it celebrates the differences in people that make them unique.

Barbara Mueske is AWARE’s Adult Mental Health Group service administrator.

Mental health...

and continuously exceeding licensing standards, AWARE is being asked to expand services. “To reduce the stigma of mental illness, it was imperative to AWARE that the homes be located in residential areas and be normalized housing that no one would look at and identify as a ‘group’ home,” Mueske said.

AWARE firmly believes that supportive housing and specially designed services can and do meet the needs of even those people with the most difficult challenges, she said.

“The people who live in the homes can live there forever if they choose, and they are individuals who have spent most of their lives in institutions,” Mueske said. “One individual who was referred from Montana State Hospital had lived at the hospital for so many years that a staff member at the state hospital told me that the staff made bets that he would return to the hospital the same day that he left.

“When evidence of success of the program was presented and the need for more intensive based community rehabilitation in other communities was identified, AMDD said they did not want any more homes like ‘ours.’ Even when gaps in services are identified and filled successfully, AMDD does not utilize that outcome data effectively.”

She also cited the case of a man in a community who is receiving AWARE adult case management service.

“He has had many failed placements and continues to struggle in a system where the service to meet his needs is not available,” she said. “If there were more intensive supported living facilities that focused on his strengths, of which he has many, like the Intensive Community Based Rehabilitation service, he would have the support and security he needs to live successfully in the community.”

To learn more about the study, visit the Children and Families Interim Committee web site at http:\www.leg.mt.gov. Public comment will be accepted at the committee meetings.
Accessibility Now  Creating welcoming housing and communities

By Michael O’Neil

Individuals and families with disabilities face two primary challenges in obtaining quality housing: accessibility and affordability.

The availability of accessible housing can make the difference between someone living an independent life in the community, and being isolated from life’s opportunities socially, economically, and politically.

Adopting enhanced accessibility features in all housing serves to benefit everyone across the age and ability spectrum—accessibility works for everyone. The failure to adopt enhanced accessibility features as standards in home design increasingly leads to significant financial costs to individual and society as a whole—costs of social isolation, the cost of retrofitting existing housing to be accessible, the cost of nursing homes and other institutional care, and creates barriers for ease of use for everyone including families, seniors, persons with disabilities, movers, emergency personnel—everyone.

Now more than ever, we need to adopt accessibility standards in all our housing if we are to create communities that are welcoming and work best for everyone.

Visiting friends and family is just as important for people who develop disabilities as it is for people without a disability. Accessible homes decrease unnecessary institutionalization. In the aftermath of a disabling accident or health event, individuals and families are ill prepared to take on the daunting task of modifying their housing so they can come home from the hospital or nursing home. Inaccessible homes create life and safety dangers for residents as well as emergency responders. Accessible homes make for easier daily living—whether it is getting the kids with their toys and strollers out the door, bringing in the groceries, or helping Grandma into the house for holiday dinner.

We often hear that cost is the main reason that minimum accessibility standards should not be adopted for all housing. In reality, minimal accessibility can be achieved at very little or no cost if incorporated at time of design and construction. The cost argument never takes into consideration the significant costs of not including access. Whom do you consciously or unconsciously choose to exclude from housing? What is the cost of social isolation? What is the cost of inappropriate institutional and nursing home care? What is the cost of difficult access for families, delivery people, and emergency personnel? We need to remember that people come in all shapes, sizes, ages, and abilities. Our housing needs to reflect this reality.

Michael O’Neil is director of the Montana Home Choice Coalition.
What’s in a name?

Unless your name is Emily or Jacob, you’re not carrying around the most popular moniker for girls or boys in Montana.

From Amanda to Zoe, Adam to Zachary, the No. 1 name in Montana for newborn girls is “Emily,” according to the Social Security Administration. The top name for boys was “Jacob.”

Those were followed by: 2. Michael and Emma; 3. Joshua and Madison; 4. Ethan and Isabella; 5. Matthew and Ava; 6. Daniel and Abigail; 7. Christopher and Olivia; 8.; Andrew and Hannah; 9. Anthony and Sophia; 10. William and Samantha. Fifty years ago the most popular baby names were Michael and Mary.

Among the top new names, AWARE has one Jacob (Henderson), the top name for boys, and an Emily (Pray). We also have Jacoba Black and Jacoba Adams.

AWARE’s staff handles include a lot of old and new popular names. We have 12 Johns, 10 Roberts and Michaels; nine Erins, and Jims; eight Jennifers and Joes; seven Michelles, Carols, Steves, and Lisas; six Richards, and Lindas; and five Donnas, Heathers and Jamies.

Among the one-of-a-kind names on the AWARE employee roster are Akhilesh, Argentina, Carter, Chenoa, Coyne, Destiny, Erman, Flannery, Knute, Larris, Louetta, Magdalena, Monette, Nelita, Pandi, Rikki, Rowdy, Sabino, Tangi, Tennille, True and Villette.

To learn more about popular baby names, visit the Social Security Administration web site: http://www.ssa.gov/cgi-bin/namesbystate.cgi.

By Jim Tracy

Smith...

- A main floor bathroom with basic maneuvering space.

Smith stressed the need to incorporate the essential access features into every new home, not just “as needed”. Retrofitting homes later for accessibility is expensive while incorporating essential access features at the original design and construction is very inexpensive. Planned-in-advance basic access costs little: $100 for new homes on a concrete slab to $500 for homes with basements are typical costs. Smith shared with us areas of success around the country in adopting visit-ability as a minimum standard in housing construction.

To view Eleanor Smith’s Visit-ability Montana presentations, go to:

http://mtdh.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/Publications/IntroVisitability.pdf
http://mtdh.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/Publications/Visitability.pdf

By Michael O’Neil

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