



Honoring Montana's Seniors

The Administration for Community Living (ACL) leads the nation in recognizing the invaluable contributions of older Americans. Each year, we celebrate their impact, highlight aging trends, and reaffirm our commitments to serving the older adults in our communities. The 2024 theme, Powered by Connection,

introduced during Older Americans Month (OAM) in May, acknowledges the profound impact meaningful relationships and social connections have on health and well-being. This theme emphasizes how connectedness supports independence and aging in place by combating isolation, loneliness, and other issues.

Rhandi Rachlis: A Life Powered by Connection

For Rhandi Rachlis of Basin, Montana, fostering meaningful connections has been a lifelong endeavor. Since moving to Montana in 1965, Rhandi has dedicated herself to her community through various roles, most notably as a volunteer at Basin Elementary School for over two decades.

"It's so convenient because I love it," she said.

"I didn't have kids when I was younger, and I thought I'll just try it. They were looking



Rhandi Rachlis

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for a foster grandma, and I just got sucked in. It's a learning experience — I'm still learning." As part of the Rocky Mountain AmeriCorps Foster Grandparents Program, Rhandi finds her volunteer work both challenging and enriching.

"I do what they tell me ... or try to," she laughed. "In the mornings, I help kindergartners and first graders with their reading and writing. I'll help them complete their worksheets, recognize letters, and understand when they need to get up and jump around a bit." Her afternoons often involve assisting older students with various tasks, from editing stories to accompanying them on field trips.

Supporting the Arts Community

Beyond her volunteer work at the school, Rhandi is an active supporter of the arts community. "I've been on lots of boards over the years, trying to help in whatever way I can," she said. Her artistic spirit shines through in her personal projects and her involvement in local initiatives, such as the artist refuge she co-manages.

Physical and Mental Well-Being

Rhandi's dedication extends to her physical and mental well-being. "I promised myself I would go to tai chi classes in Boulder, but I haven't gone yet. Instead, I do my own exercises and meditations at home." Her routine includes morning meditations, pushups, and inversions, which she believes are beneficial for her

brain and body. "My pushups and my inversions have really helped my back and my knees. And I ride my bike while listening to music," she explained.

Challenges of Aging

Despite her active lifestyle, Rhandi acknowledges the challenges of aging. "I'm sad for what I'm losing. I'm 87, and I'm not as smart or energetic as I used to be. I can't work as hard, and I'm more isolated socially and culturally because I don't want to drive at night anymore." She expressed a desire to move closer to services and community events, but finding affordable housing has been difficult.

Keeping Engaged and Connected

Through all these changes, Rhandi remains committed to staying engaged and connected. She enjoys exploring different music genres on iTunes and maintains a keen interest in ethnic and folk music. "I love discovering new music. Recently, I found a Ukraine radio station that plays ethnic music from around the world."

Rhandi Rachlis exemplifies the spirit of Older Americans Month. Her lifelong contributions to her community, her dedication to fostering connections, and her pursuit of personal growth and well-being inspire us all. As we reflect on Older Americans Month, let's honor the remarkable seniors like Rhandi who continue to enrich our lives and communities.

Administrator's Corner



Barb Smith
Retiring SLTCD Administrator

Welcome to the inaugural issue of Aging in the 406. This newsletter, previously called Aging Horizons and put together by Aging Horizons host Kimme Evermann, is now under new stewardship. It is with heavy hearts that we remember Kimme's passing. Her dedication and passion for senior and long-term care left an indelible mark on our community.

This new Aging in the 406 format will span the entire Senior and Long Term Care (SLTC) division. We will share messages from community services, aging services, adult protective services, and administration. This broader scope aims to keep you informed and engaged with the latest developments across our division.

On another front, I have important news to share. After 30 years of service to the state of Montana, I am retiring. Of those 30 years, I have spent 17 years in Senior and Long Term Care. During this time, I have witnessed remarkable developments in our services, forged new partnerships, and expanded our outreach to the elderly and physically challenged populations of Montana.

My goal has always been to ensure quality, accessible services that help individuals remain safely in their homes and communities. The dedicated staff of the SLTC division will continue this mission, maintaining the high standards we have set.

I have handed leadership over to Trevor Tangen, who will serve as acting administrator until the recruitment process is completed. Trevor brings a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to our mission, ensuring a seamless transition.

My last day will be June 28. After that, I look forward to helping one of my children move to medical school and assisting another with their wedding. Then, I plan to breathe, relax, and simply enjoy life.

Thank you for your continued commitment to Montana's senior and long-term care community. Your dedication makes all the difference.

Warm regards,
Barb Smith



Are You A Montana Veteran?

Take the Veteran Long-Term Care Survey

Imagine a future where every Montana veteran receives the care and support they deserve, tailored to their unique needs and experiences. This vision is driving DPHHS to gather insights from veterans across the state. With more than 3,400 veterans already participating, the goal is to reach at least 5,000 responses by July 15, 2024.

This survey, launched following the approval of House Bill 264 and signed by Governor Greg Gianforte in April 2023, focuses on assessing Montana's veteran population demographics, the current state of long-term care services, and future needs. The goal is to create a robust data set that will guide the development of services tailored to veterans' needs.

Tailoring Services

"Valuable insight from survey participants will help us tailor our services more effectively, ensuring they meet the real and evolving needs of our veteran population," said Barb Smith, Senior and Long Term Care (SLTC) administrator. Smith emphasized the importance of the survey in examining needs for nursing home care, domiciliary support, Alzheimer's disease services, and various types of community and in-home care.

Additionally, it will assess the condition and capacity of Montana's veteran cemeteries.

Veterans like Blake Fuhriman, Executive Director for the Veterans Navigation Network, recognize the survey's significance. "This survey provides an opportunity for veterans like myself to have a say in how our state treats veterans," Fuhriman said. "That is definitely worth the 15 minutes of time it took me to complete the survey."

The survey is available online at veteransurvey.mt.gov until July 15, 2024. For those who prefer a hard copy, a downloadable version is also available on the website.

Presenting the Findings

In collaboration with the Montana Veterans Affairs Division, the SLTC will compile the survey results into a detailed report for the State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Interim Committee in September. This comprehensive assessment will inform future strategies to ensure Montana's veterans receive the care and support they deserve.

Veterans' voices are crucial in shaping the services that will support them and future generations. Take the survey, join a focus group, and contribute to the future of veteran care in Montana.

Celebrate Aging

Join the Governor's Conference on Aging

For more than 50 years, the Governor's Conference on Aging has been a cornerstone event, bringing together older adults, caregivers, families, and service providers. This conference tackles important issues elders and individuals with disabilities face. Through a wide range of informative sessions, it fosters understanding, support, and practical tools for navigating the challenges of aging and caring for vulnerable individuals.

This year the conference takes place October 1 -3, at the Billings Hotel and Convention Center. A highlight of the conference is the luncheon celebrating Montana's Centenarians. This special luncheon will take place on October 1st from 12:00 to 1:30 p.m. This heartwarming event celebrates their extraordinary lives and contributions to their communities and the state.

Don't miss out! Head over to the conference website: conferenceonaging.mt.gov. There you'll find everything you need to know about the conference, including the program schedule, registration details, and how to get involved as a sponsor or vendor.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the conference and secure your spot today.



NEED HELP WITH SENIOR SERVICES?

Area Agencies on Aging offer guidance on health-care, Medicaid, Medicare, nutrition, and other essential services for elder adults. Contact your local agency for personalized support and resources.

Area I - Eastern MT
(406) 377-3564

Area II - Roundup Area
(406) 323-1320

Area III - North-Central MT
(406) 271-7553

Area IV - Helena Area
(406) 447-1680

Area V - Butte Area
(406) 782-5555

Area VI - Polson Area
(406) 883-7284

Area VII - Missoula Area
(406) 728-7682

Area VIII - Great Falls Area
(406) 454-6990

Area IV - Kalispell Area
(406) 758-5730

Lianna Waller

A Dedicated Leader in Adult Protective Services

Lianna Waller has just been appointed the interim bureau chief of Adult Protective Services (APS) at the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) Senior and Long-Term Care Division. She steps into this role as the previous bureau chief, Trevor Tangen, becomes the interim administrator for the Senior and



Lianna Waller
Interim Bureau Chief, APS

Long-Term Care Division. Lianna has built a remarkable career dedicated to social services, significantly impacting Montana's most vulnerable populations.

Her journey in APS began in 2017 when she joined as an investigator. Since then, her commitment and leadership have been evident. In 2021, Lianna became the first Social Services Worker at APS, where she created the APS guardianship unit. She managed this unit until her promotion to Section Supervisor, the second in command. In this role, she oversaw both the guardianship unit and APS Intake. Her tenure as section supervisor demonstrated her exceptional ability to handle multiple responsibilities and improve service delivery processes.

From June 2022 to August 2023, Lianna served as the acting bureau chief while Trevor was deployed overseas for military service. During this period, she ensured APS continued to operate smoothly, maintaining the high standards expected by the department.

"She's the go-to for all things APS, an outstanding leader," said

Trevor. "She is always looking to improve processes to ensure the elderly and disabled adults in Montana receive the best service possible."

Lianna's academic background laid a strong foundation for her career. She graduated from the University of Montana in 2009 with a bachelor's degree in biology and secondary education, along with a minor in psychology. She resides with her husband, their 11-year-old daughter, and two dogs. Outside of her professional life, she enjoys spending time in the mountains, camping, hiking, skiing, and simply being outdoors. Her love for the outdoors reflects her upbringing in Missoula and her appreciation for the natural beauty of Montana.

Lianna's passion for helping others emerged early in her life. During her high school years, she lettered for the number of volunteer hours she accumulated, many of which were spent at the Poverello Center, a shelter for the unhoused, and at a local assisted living center as an activities and crafts director. This strong desire to help others led her to a career in social services aimed at reducing risks for vulnerable populations across Montana.

In 2014, Lianna started working for the State of Montana as a child protection specialist before transitioning to Adult Protective Services in 2017. Her experience in both child and adult protective services has equipped her with a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by different vulnerable groups and the best practices to support them.

Lianna's dedication to APS is evident in her words and actions. "I love the work that APS does and feel proud to represent all our staff who work incredibly hard to ensure

that Montana's most vulnerable are safe and protected," she said. As the interim bureau chief, she aims to continue the great work APS does every day and to ensure that the staff feel supported and valued.

Her favorite quote, "You live two lives: the one you are living and the one you begin living after you learn you only have one life," resonates deeply with her approach to both her personal and professional life. This philosophy underscores her commitment to making a meaningful impact through her work and encouraging others to do the same.

Lianna Waller's career exemplifies dedication, leadership, and a deep-seated passion for helping others. Her journey from an investigator to the interim bureau chief of APS demonstrates her unwavering commitment to improving the lives of Montana's elderly and disabled adults. With her at the helm, APS continues to strive for excellence in protecting and serving the state's most vulnerable populations.



WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SUSPECT ABUSE OF A VULNERABLE ADULT?

Adult Protective Services specialists help protect vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect and exploitation. They help end abuse by matching the needs of the person with community partners in their area, such as mental health professionals, public health officials, law enforcement, the courts, the aging network, and other community groups.

- **If you suspect harm is occurring right now, call 911**
- **If the concern is not life-threatening, you can call 1-844-277-9300 or contact APS online: dphhs.mt.gov/sltc/aps/**
- **If you would like more info about APS, contact Senior and Long Term Care to get a brochure: (406) 444-4077**

Money Follows the Person

Empowering Transitions to Community Living



For more than a decade, the Money Follows the Person (MFP) program has transformed lives by assisting states in promoting and enhancing access to Home and Community-Based Services. As the longest-running demonstration project in the history of Medicaid, MFP has enabled more than 109,000 individuals nationwide to transition from institutional settings, such as nursing homes and hospitals, back into their communities.

Providing a Lifeline

Since its inception in 2014, Montana's MFP demonstration project has helped approximately 269 seniors and individuals with disabilities move out of institutional settings and return to their communities. This program offers a lifeline to those who have resided in an institutional setting for at least 60 days, with Medicaid covering their care for at least one of those days

Program Requirements

Eligible participants must also join one of Montana's Waiver Partner programs, such as the Big Sky Waiver, the Severe Disabling Mental Illness Waiver (SDMI), or the Developmental Disability Waiver. Each participant receives person-centered planning tailored to meet their unique transition and service needs. This planning process allows individuals to discuss their goals, skills, abilities, and what is truly important to them with their team of providers.

Overcoming Barriers

MFP helps participants overcome barriers to community living by providing demonstration services, including:

- Rent and utility deposits when necessary
- Assistance with past due rent and utility bills/deposits
- Purchase of household goods and services, including basic household furnishings, bedding, kitchenware, etc.
- Environmental and/or vehicle modifications

Transitioning

Participants must transition to an MFP-qualified residential setting, which includes:

- A home owned or leased by the participant or their family member

- An apartment with an individual lease, secure access, and living, sleeping, bathing, and cooking areas controlled by the participant or family member
- A community-based residential setting, such as a group home with a maximum of four unrelated people (excluding caregivers or personal attendants)

Providing Continual Support

MFP participation is available for 365 days, ensuring continuous support during the transition period. A dedicated team, including a Project Director, a Grant Specialist/State Transition Coordinator, a Data Analyst, and Housing Specialist, supports participants in living independently in the community. The team works across the state and is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m..

Greater Independence

Living in the community offers greater independence and the chance to create a home that suits individual lifestyles. If you or a loved one currently resides in an institutional setting and wishes to transition back into the community, MFP can help make that a reality.

Reach Out for More Info

For referrals or more info, contact MFP Project Director April Staudinger at MoneyFollowsThePerson@mt.gov, call (406) 439-6870, fax (406) 655-7646, or visit dphhs.mt.gov/sltc/mfp.

Your journey to a more independent life in the community starts with a simple step.



HOW CAN I QUALIFY?

Residency Requirements

- Must have lived 60 consecutive days in a qualifying facility
- Transition work may begin in advance of the 60th day

Medicaid Eligibility

- Must be Medicaid eligible for at least one day prior to transition
- Transition work can begin without Medicaid eligibility

Program Eligibility

- Must be eligible for either the Big Sky Waiver (for the elderly and physically disabled) or the SDMI Waiver (for serious disabling mental illness).

Housing Criteria

- Home owned or leased by a participant or family member
- Apartment with individual lease, secure access, as well as living, sleeping, bathing and cooking areas where a participant or family has control
- Community-based residential setting such as a group home with a maximum of 4 unrelated people (excluding caregivers and personal attendants)

Unmasking the Con

How to Protect Yourself from Fraud

By Alex Ward

Unfortunately, as good Americans, we feel we can never be fooled. Having spent 26 years in Law Enforcement, I can tell you quite truthfully that we are very wrong. There is no better example of this phenomena than in the arena of Cons and Fraud.

Confidence Games

Most of us don't know where the term con comes from – some probably connect it with convicts in prison, but that is not the case. The term comes from what we used to teach in Police Academies – “Confidence Games.” The idea of the con is to convince us (often using information we give them) that they are good people – just like us, and that whatever they say must be true.

These criminals have further focused that idea to the point of talking about putting the victim into “the ether.” They do this in two ways. First, they suggest the victim is entitled to an unbelievable gift – so large they can't even imagine it. Or second, they get the victim to believe they are about to go to jail, or a family member or friend is in dire straits. In either of these cases, the victim is overwhelmed and likely not thinking clearly and may fall for the pitch.

I've been watching con pitches for the past 40 years and can say cons are experts at second guessing the victim. They can in a few moments on the phone (or internet, or social media, or via text) tailor their pitch to draw in the victim and convince them they should be heard.

Organized Crime Groups

These criminals are often part of very organized criminal groups. Recently, the MGM Grand in Las Vegas was brought to its knees by two very organized criminal enterprises using ransomware to take over all their computers. They asked for \$17 million, which the MGM Grand refused to pay. They instead chose to bring in technicians to rebuild their protection. This cost them most likely \$100 million, but they at least hadn't given up the money to terrorists.

The two groups involved in this ransomware attack were Scattered Spider, which is part of a large group (Black Cat - over 1000 people) who focus on cyber attacks, and ALPHV, which is of eastern European origin. These two groups, possibly working together, caused the attack.

This hack didn't just cost the hotel/casino giant to lose money, but also individual guests as well. Their information



was hijacked. It will certainly take months to know who all was victimized.

The interesting thing about the MGM Grand hijack is that it began with a Smishing phone call to IT. Smishing is a phishing cybersecurity attack carried out over mobile text messaging, also known as SMS phishing.

Protect Yourself

We need to understand much more about the various ways hackers get our information.

There are things you can do, aside from just hanging up, which I would recommend, but if you aren't interested in that, here are four things that will reduce your chances of letting criminals take your money or information.

Use multifactor authentication when allowing your account to be accessed. This is usually set up by your bank, credit card company, or other organizations you do business with.

Use passwordless authentication. Again, this is set up by organizations you do business with. There are various ways to do this, and you can check with the organizations to decide which works best for you.

Limit the number of "superadministrators" that have complete access to your system.

Use tougher authentication for extremely sensitive data.

For more information call the AARP Fraud watch Network Help line at 877-908-3360.