# **Success Stories from the Montana Disability and Health Program**

## **Living Well with a Disability Improves Health and Saves Money**

### **Public Health Issue**

 People with disabilities compose about 20% of the U.S. population but account for nearly half of all medical expenditures. A combination of medical, rehabilitation, and community advancements have increased the life expectancy of people with disabilities. A challenge for public health is to ensure these added years are quality life years. The *Living Well with a Disability* (*LWD)* evidence-based CDC-sponsored health promotion program meets this challenge by reducing the effects of health problems and associated medical expenses for people with physical disabilities or mobility impairments.1

*“Living Well with a Disability has been a great experience. The 10-week program allows individuals with disabilities to create a healthy lifestyle plan, unique to their desires and strengths, to overcome every day and ongoing challenges, and to reach meaningful life goals. It is awesome!”*

*~Darren Larson, LWD Facilitator*

Darren Larson (right) and Michael O’Neil

### **Program Overview**

A national study funded by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Disability and Health Program indicated that a state would save approximately $81,000 to $240,000 above the cost of the *LWD* program when implemented with 240 participants each year. The Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities (RTC:Rural), in partnership with MTDH, provides the organizational and facilitator training and technical assistance to Centers for Independent Living and other community agencies that implement LWD workshops. *LWD* teaches skills to manage health, solve problems, communicate with service providers, avoid frustration and depression, increase physical activity and nutrition, and maintain healthy lifestyle practices.

### **Making a Difference**

From February 1995 to April, 2016, RTC:Rural staff trained 1,159 LWD facilitators in 46 states, who served more than 9,272 adults with disabilities. The vast majority of trained facilitators were located in 16 of the 18 states with \*CDC Disability and Health programs ([http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/index.html)](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/index.html). Since 2002, 735 LWD facilitators in current and previous CDC Disability and Health funded states reached over 5,880 workshop participants, whose symptom-free days are estimated at having increased by 69,972 days. The estimated net benefit to healthcare payers is between $5.5 and $9.4 million.

**Shaping Tomorrow**

Contact your state Department of Public Health and Human Services to discuss LWD as a possible Medicaid reimbursable service through the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waiver programs.

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