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NEWS RELEASE

Dec. 13, 2006

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AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION HONORS UM PROFESSOR

MISSOULA—

University of Montana psychology Professor Tom Seekins received the 2006 Alan Meyers Award from the Disability Forum of the American Public Health Association at the association's annual meeting in Boston.

The award goes to individuals who combine excellence across the areas of research, teaching and advocacy to improve the health and quality of life for people with disabilities.

Seekins is director of the Research and Training Center on Rural Rehabilitation at UM's Rural Institute.

In 1988, with colleagues at UM and at the University of Kansas, Seekins began work on an approach now called community-based participatory research. The approach involves people with disabilities and service providers in all phases of designing and conducting research.

Seekins and his colleagues first worked with groups to define health issues that were being confronted by people with disabilities. After analyzing the research data, they began to understand more effective ways to deliver health promotion information, especially to rural communities.

The research led to the Rural Institute's successful and cost-effective Living Well with a

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Disability Program, which has helped people throughout the nation who deal with mobility impairment.

Seekins' research now has been extended to include adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

APHA's Disability Forum works to broaden awareness regarding disability and related issues among public health professions. Information about the organization is available online at <http://www.apha.org>.

For information about UM's Rural Institute, visit <http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu>.

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