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Event highlights health issues for women with disabilities

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NEWS RELEASE

Feb. 25, 2009

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EVENT HIGHLIGHTS HEALTH ISSUES FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

MISSOULA —

A multimedia exhibit to raise awareness of health issues for Montana women with disabilities, especially in the area of breast cancer awareness and screening, will be held from 6 to 9 p.m. Friday, March 6, in Missoula.

“Every Woman Matters: Portraits of Montana Women Living with Disabilities” will take place at Begleiter Photography Studio, located at 223 W. Front St.

The event launches the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s “Right to Know” campaign in Montana. The campaign is designed to increase awareness of the importance of breast cancer screening among women with physical disabilities.

Catering will be hosted by Advanced Imaging, Big Sky Brewing and Pattee Creek Market.

The exhibit features black-and-white portraits of Montana women – some of them breast cancer survivors, all of them role models and advocates. The portraits, taken by internationally acclaimed portrait photographer Steven Begleiter, are augmented by a multimedia video project produced by University of Montana journalism students and UM Assistant Professor Jeremy Lurgio.

Portrait production costs were covered by a grant from the Montana affiliate of the

Susan G. Komen for the Cure. The women's hair styling and makeup were done by volunteers Elly Burton and Randi Pilgrim of Burton's Classics.

The event's premiere in Missoula kicks off a traveling exhibit, which will next stop in **Helena** in May to coincide with the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure. "Every Woman Matters" then will travel to communities across the state and will be available for health conferences and other professional events.

Because women with physical disabilities are less likely than other women to have ongoing breast cancer screening – in part because they face barriers that other women don't encounter – "Every Woman Matters" hopes to encourage people to take on the challenge to ensure there are accessible facilities for breast cancer screening statewide.

"There are women out there, like myself, with a disability," said Lynne Kelly, an event spokeswoman. "They've got to be having the same problem. I can't be the only person who's having this problem."

Women with disabilities often face obstacles such as difficulty with transportation to physicians' offices, trouble undressing for exams and climbing onto traditional exam tables, raising their arms for breast exams or positioning themselves and their wheelchairs appropriately for mammograms.

One of the objectives of "Every Woman Matters" is to increase knowledge among health care providers about best practices regarding breast cancer screening for women with physical disabilities and to help empower women to ask for what they need from health care providers.

"Every woman counts – everyone is important," said event spokeswoman Monica Garrahan. "Every woman has the right to get the screenings she needs. Every woman

matters.”

The Montana Centers for Independent Living, Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation, Montana Division of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Brain Injury Association of Montana, Northern Rocky Mountain Easter Seals Society and Polio Survivors of Montana contributed significantly to the exhibit.

For more information, call Meg Ann Traci, project director of the Montana Disability and Health Program, at 406-243-4956 or e-mail matraci@ruralinstitute.umt.edu. The Montana Disability and Health Program is a partnership of the Montana Department of Health and Human Services and UM Rural Institute.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Photos are available by calling Meg Ann Traci at 406-243-4956 or e-mailing matraci@ruralinstitute.umt.edu.

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