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Exhibit highlights importance of breast cancer screening

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NEWS RELEASE

Oct. 26, 2009

Contact: Meg Ann Traci, UM Rural Institute, 406-243-4956, matraci@ruralinstitute.umt.edu.

EXHIBIT HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF BREAST CANCER SCREENING

MISSOULA —

A multimedia exhibit – “Every Woman Matters: Portraits of Montana Women Living with Disabilities” – will open Friday, Nov. 6, at the History Museum in **Great Falls**.

The exhibit aims to raise awareness of health and wellness, especially in the area of breast cancer screening among Montana women with disabilities.

The museum will hold an opening reception from 4 to 7 p.m. Nov. 6 during First Friday Art Walk. The exhibit will be at the museum, located at 422 Second St. S., through Jan. 8.

“Every Woman Matters” 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 School of Journalism students and UM Assistant Professor Jeremy Lurgio.

To complement the exhibit, the museum also will host a collection of Tom Olin’s award-winning photographs. Olin is a social documentarian and photojournalist whose photo archives provide a history of the disability rights movement in America. His photos are part of the Smithsonian Institution’s Americans with Disabilities Act exhibition.

The reception and exhibits will help launch the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention “Right to Know” campaign in Cascade County. The campaign is designed to increase awareness of the importance of breast cancer screening among women with physical disabilities.

About 30 percent of women 40 years or older have a disability. In the United States in 2008, 76.2 percent of women 40 or older reported having a mammogram in the past two years. Women with a disability have a lower reported mammography rate than women without a disability. More information is on the “Right to Know” Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/righttoknow>.

“Every Woman Matters” portrait production was supported by a grant from the Montana affiliate of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure. Hair styling and makeup were done by volunteers Elly Burton and Randi Pilgrim of Burton’s Classics in Missoula.

The exhibit premiered in Missoula in March and traveled to Helena in May to coincide with the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure. It also has been displayed at various meetings and conferences throughout the state.

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.

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

Women with physical disabilities are less likely than other women to have ongoing breast cancer screening, in part because they face barriers or challenges other women don’t encounter. They often face obstacles such as difficulty with transportation to physicians’ offices and trouble

undressing for exams, climbing onto traditional exam tables, raising their arms for breast exams or positioning themselves and their wheelchairs appropriately for mammograms.

“Every woman counts – everyone is important,” said event spokeswoman Connie Leveque. “Every woman has the right to get the screenings she needs. Every woman matters.”

North Central Independent Living Services, Benefis Healthcare Foundation, the UM Rural Institute Montana Disability and Health Program, NorthWestern Energy, Polio Survivors of Montana, the Cascade County City-County Health Department and the Montana State University College of Nursing are contributors to the event.

For more information, call Meg Ann Traci, project director, 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 UM’s Rural Institute and the Montana Department of Health and Human Services.

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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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