



# MYLF

STATE HOUSE AND CLERK

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DATE 9-21-05

HB 550

## Montana Youth Leadership Forum

[www.montanaylf.org](http://www.montanaylf.org)

### Youth with Disabilities Facts

- 5,432 Montana High School Students are in special education.
- Employment for youth with disabilities remains low with people with disabilities having an unemployment rate of 70-75%.
- Due to low self-esteem youth, with disabilities have a higher drug and alcohol abuse rate.
- Youth with disabilities have one of the highest dropout rates in Montana
- Traditional leadership training programs such as Boys' State and Girls' State are not available nor accessible to youth with disabilities.

### Funds for the Montana Youth Leadership Forum HB550

*Mission - To identify students with disabilities who have exhibited leadership skills and to equip them with additional training so they may become leaders by example.*

Youth Leadership Forum's (YLF's) are a national initiative with twenty-six states participating. The curriculum for the program comes from California. In 2000 Montana held its first Youth Leadership Forum, and over the past five years dozens of high school students with disabilities have completed the program. The Youth Leadership Forum has been held on the campus of MSU-Billings, and funds have been provided through a variety of donations and grants.

Each state has developed different approaches to the funding of their Youth Leadership Forum, and some states have been unable to secure funding and have had to discontinue their Forum. We are working to have a public-private partnership in the funding of this program.

#### Montana Youth Leadership Forum statistics

- Seventy-five youth from across Montana have completed the program
- Retention rates of those who have completed the program is 97%
- 16 have gone on to college
- 13 Alumni are employed
- 32 Alumni are still in high school

Alumni have gone on to serve on the President's Council on Employment of People with Disabilities, serve as a Congressional Intern, speak at state and national conferences about the program, and build a network of peer support for each other.

***Please support youth with disabilities for they are our future.***



Make a difference in  
a youth's life

- Become a sponsor
- Become a volunteer
- Become a mentor
- Become a presenter

For more information contact:

MYLF

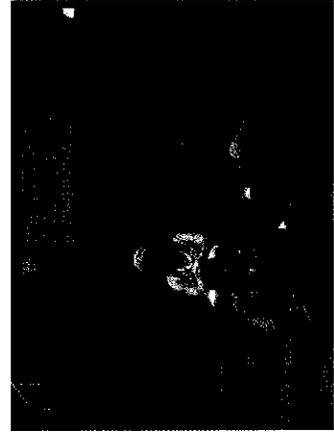
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**For**

**Students**

**With**

**Disabilities**

[www.montanaylf.org](http://www.montanaylf.org)

# MYLFF Makes a Difference

## MYLFF Mission

To identify students with disabilities who have exhibited leadership skills and to equip them with additional training so they may become leaders by example.

MYLFF students will expand their knowledge of the culture of disabilities, learn about all types of disabilities, and meet adults who are living successfully with disabilities.



"It's not possible for people with disabilities to truly integrate until we are recognized as having pride in who we are as disabled people."

- Steve Brown, Founder, Institute on Disability Culture

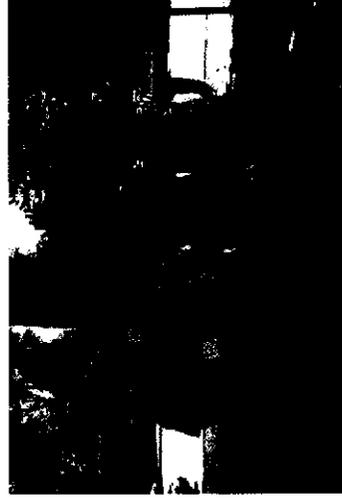
## Quotes From MYLFF Delegates

"This (forum) has given me confidence in going forward with my dreams." - Sierra Lode

"Speakers helped to inspire me to help in my community and stand up for what is right."  
- Gene Hermanson

"MYLFF has taught me that it is okay to be different, that I may have to learn things in a different way, but I am important in life."  
- Kati Blaskovich

"MYLFF changed me and the way I defend my rights. I will never forget it." - Tess Raunig



## MYLFF Goals

Student delegates will develop:

- Leadership plans to use upon return to their communities.
- Academic and career goals.
- Work ethics and a belief that work is not only a right but also a social obligation to reach their full potential.
- Resource development plan in order to attain continued or more completed independence.
- One year of follow up and mentoring to ensure implementation of plans.

"Regardless of our individual experiences and superficial appearances we all share one integral human similarity, the need to feel valued, productive, and connected." - Catherine Kelly Baird