



STATEWIDE NEWSPAPER GUEST EDITORIAL

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Montana may seem a long way from the problems facing urban centers in the United States. After all, a 2006 US Census estimate shows the state's total population at less than 950,000 or just 6.2 people per square mile. Our crime rates are low, water supply clean, government budgets balanced and neighbors friendly. But, one thing we share with every other state in the country is the pressing problem of a health care worker shortage.

Our overall health care system and the quality of our individual health care depend on our registered and advance practice registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, physical therapists, x-ray techs, physician assistants, lab techs, EMTs, certified medical assistants and not to mention primary care and specialty physicians, to name a few. These hardworking professionals help ensure each and every Montanan has access to the best possible health care. They are truly invaluable and we need more of them all across our state.

New West Health Services is committed to Montana, committed to Montanans and committed to connecting people to good health care in a simplified way. We want to help our future caregivers get the education they need so they can build their careers right here at home. With that in mind, we have created the "Health Care for Montanans" scholarship program and are partnering with Montana's institutions of higher learning to award scholarships to Montana students interested in careers in this vital area.

The program kicks off this fall with up to ten \$2,000 scholarships to be awarded in December 2008 for use during the 2009 Spring Semester at the following four-year colleges or universities in Montana: Montana State University-Bozeman, Montana State University-Billings, Montana State University-Northern, University of Montana-Missoula, Montana Tech of the University of Montana-Butte, Carroll College in Helena, the University of Great Falls and Rocky Mountain College in Billings.

Students must be Montana residents in their junior or senior year of a four-year degree program or a graduate program in public health and/or nursing. All Montana residents enrolled in their junior or senior year at any of these schools and majoring in a health care shortage career area are encouraged to apply. The student should have a GPA of at least 3.0 to be eligible for the scholarship. Applicants need to be interested in pursuing a health care career in the state of Montana after graduation.

Complete scholarship criteria and applications are available at the New West company office in Helena, the financial aid offices of all participating schools and on-line at the New West website: www.newwesthealth.com

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The completed scholarship applications are due back at New West offices by Saturday, November 15, 2008. We encourage all eligible Montana students to take advantage of this scholarship opportunity and respond as quickly as possible.

This is the first year the “Health Care for Montanans” scholarship program has been in existence, but it won’t be the last. New West Health Services is strongly committed to a multi-year program, and will be offering additional scholarships to include Montana colleges of technology and tribal colleges for the 2009-2010 academic year. It’s just one of the many ways New West Health Services is working towards a solution to the growing healthcare professional worker shortage in Montana and helping our fellow Montanans achieve their goals and degrees.

David Kibbe
President and CEO

Tanya Ask
V.P. of External and Provider Relations

New West Health Services is Montana’s provider-sponsored health services corporation with more than 41,000 members across Montana.