

# Physical therapist among elite company of fellows

By MARK PAGE

In June, a 50-year-old runner came into Angela Listug-Vap's physical therapy office wanting to run Missoula's half-marathon. But with the race only about four weeks away, she was in no shape to compete.

"She was having severe hip pain," Listug-Vap said. "She thought she wasn't going to be able to run."

Upon first meeting, Listug-Vap knew the woman would not be helped by simple exercises on a treadmill. So she recommended the woman spend the next few weeks at the runners' clinic Listug-Vap operated at Alpine Physical Therapy.

When Listug-Vap finished with the runner, she was not only able to compete in the half-marathon, but was able to finish faster than she had hoped.

"She was able to complete the half-marathon - with an improved stride, in a time she didn't think she could do it in," Listug-Vap said.

Listug-Vap is the pride of Missoula's Alpine Physical Therapy.

When owner Brent Dodge talks about her, he admittedly gets a little excited. **She is the only physical therapist in Montana who has attained the advanced training to be named a fellow of the American Academy of Orthopedic Manual Physical Therapists.**

"She is an incredible mentor to this team and has just raised our level of expertise," Dodge said. "She involves herself with us as an educator."

**Fewer than 3 percent of physical therapists in the United States have attained this level of education,** according to Carol Jo Tichenor, director of the



Angela Listug-Vap is a **physical therapist at Alpine Physical Therapy** and has become a **fellow of the American Academy of Orthopedic Manual Physical Therapists.**

Photo by LINDA THOMPSON/Missoulian

program at Kaiser Permanente in San Francisco where Listug-Vap had her fellowship.

**"This training is so difficult that only the most dedicated people actually come for this level of training," Tichenor said. "Angela wanted to be the best physical therapist in her community."**

A fellow in this program learns physical therapy with a more hands-on approach, according to Tichenor. These manual treatments are aimed at restoring motion and strength.

**Listug-Vap excels in this area because of her extraordinary abilities in analyzing patient's needs, Tichenor said.**

"Angela was an exceptional student in our program because she has exceptional analytical skills to solve patients' problems," Tichenor said. "She has very good listening skills."

Dodge is no slouch himself. Both he and Listug-Vap have obtained doctoral degrees in physical therapy. At Alpine, he runs a golf clinic where he helps players, including

U.S. Senior Open amateur Gary Koprivica, to regain their game after accidents or injuries, and he's one of only two physical therapists in Montana to be certified by Titleist.

He hired Listug-Vap in January 2007, shortly after she completed her fellowship training at Kaiser Permanente. It wasn't until this past January that she was inducted as a fellow. **Now she works with many area doctors who Dodge said send her the toughest cases with "complex, challenging pain conditions."**

Listug-Vap didn't always want to be a physical therapist. Growing up, she always had her sights set on becoming a lawyer. She maintained this all the way to Willamette University in Oregon, where she worked as a receptionist at the law school. There she realized the profession wasn't for her.

Lost, Listug-Vap kept up with her undergraduate classes and started teaching aerobics.

"That's when I got interested in movement," Listug-Vap said.

This prompted her to take a class in human anatomy. Her interest grew from there and took her all the way to graduate school for physical therapy at Pacific University. Her teachers there inspired her to take her education as far as possible.

**"My spine professor while I was in physical therapy school was a fellowship trained manual therapist," she said. "And he was amazing. I wanted to be like him."**

Now, at 31, Listug-Vap is herself an educator. She takes on clinical interns from the University of Montana's School of Physical Therapy in their final internships.

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