Nancy Bentley, director of Active Re-Entry, receives the Community Investment Award from CAC member Kelly Holt. Active Re-Entry Centers for Independent Living in Price, Utah was named the recipient of the Consumer Advisory Council's Community Investment Award. Active Re-Entry serves individuals with disabilities in Utah’s seven easternmost counties—Dagget, Duchesne, Uintah, Carbon, Emery, Grand and San Juan—covering more than 27,000 square miles from Wyoming to Arizona. Nancy Bentley is the executive director, and accepted the $1,500 award from Bryce Fifield, director of Utah State University’s Center for Persons with Disabilities, on Thursday, Feb. 21 in Price.

The Consumer Advisory Council (CAC) is comprised of self-advocates, family members and representatives from state agencies. “We look to this group for ideas and strategies … to find ways to give people with disabilities a voice,” Fifield said. Kelly Holt, a self-advocate from Price, is a member of the CAC and nominated Active Re-Entry for the award. “I feel that the CAC (Consumer Advisory Council) should award Active Re-Entry the Community Investment Award because they do just that, they invest themselves in the Eastern Utah Disability Community,” Holt wrote in a letter nominating the organization. “They make people believe it’s ok to be different. They help people with disabilities stay or become more self-sufficient so that they can lead productive and independent lives within their own communities. They give caregivers and families the knowledge that there is help for them too, when they thought there was none. This is especially important in rural areas where programs for those with disabilities are often difficult to find and services hard to get.”

From left, CPD Director Bryce Fifield, Active Re-Entry Director Nancy Bentley and CAC member Kelly Holt. The CAC has given money to other organizations in the past, but this is the first time a committee of self-advocates was responsible for choosing the recipient, Fifield said. The committee had to research programs and come to a consensus to choose a winner. “Rarely do folks like Kelly get the opportunity to advocate for programs for people with disabilities,” Fifield said. “It was a different kind of experience for them.” Bentley said money from the Community Investment Award would likely be used for assistive technology, although it could be used to help a person with a disability maintain their independence. “A $75 grab bar in the bathtub can make the difference between being independent and being in a nursing home,” Bentley said, adding that last year, Active Re-Entry helped 27 people move out of nursing homes to regain their independence. Services provided by Active Re-Entry include independent living skills training and classes, service coordination and referrals, assistive technology training and AT loan program, caregiver and grief support groups, peer counseling, education for the visually impaired, self-advocacy training, PAWS Animal Therapy Program, SCOODEO (a nationally recognized safety training program for those who have no other means of transportation than an electric scooter) and PERKIE Travels (a coordinated cancer treatment transportation system to help get people to the Utah Valley area for their radiation treatment). Many of Active Re-Entry’s programs are used in all seven of their rural locations, Holt said, but as a community-based program, it can respond to each community’s needs. For example, the Moab office helps veterans adjust back into society, offers exercise classes and low-vision clinics and does blood pressure checks. Tech Tuesdays in the Vernal office teach people how to use computers, e-readers and other electronic equipment.