

FREEDOM



VOTE!
November 2

Freedom Resource Center for Independent Living, Inc.

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Mission Statement

The mission of Freedom Resource Center for Independent Living is to work toward equality and inclusion for people with disabilities through programs of empowerment, community education and systems change.

Vision Statement

We envision a society where ALL individuals are valued, respected and have an equal opportunity, access, responsibility, and freedom of choice in all aspects of life.

Politics and the Disability Community

The following is the result of four opinions on our current political climate. Nate “the animal” Aalgaard, Mark “the rock” Bourdon, Scott “the fanatic” Burlingame, and Chuck “the swimmer” Stebbins contributed. We thought we would give this a go and see how it turns out. There was no blood spilled in this effort, and we have all agreed, for the most part, that it reflects a collective opinion that gives a non-partisan view of a political climate like no other that we have experienced in our lifetimes. So, enjoy.

Well, by the time that you all are reading this, provided that we have gotten this out in a timely fashion, we’re willing to bet Scott’s first born male child that 70% of the disability community will NOT vote. We are also willing to bet that 90% of the people who DO vote have already made up their mind. So if 30% vote, and 90% of those who vote have made up their mind, that means that

about 27% of people with disabilities have decided TO vote, and they know who they are going to vote for. Meanwhile, statistically speaking, about 73% either are not going to vote, or do not know who they are going to vote for. So, we could say it’s up for grabs. Now you know why we bet Scott’s kid; he crunched the numbers.

Trying to sort through all this political rhetoric is a pretty tough task. For those of us actually trying to follow the issues, it is frustrating at best; and for those forming an opinion off of a 30-second sound bite, shame on you. Now, you march your skinny little butt right out into that living room young man, SIT DOWN and watch the entire News Hour with Jim and the gang. Now, understand we are not listening to or reading about, or drooling over one single solitary warped voice that claims to speak for the masses. We’re talking about getting all of it, every dad gum piece of crap liberal talk radio, to every blasted “well maybe I will” conservative so called think tank review. If YOU want to form an opinion, a real informed opinion, YOU must get as much of the information as you can. Then when YOU’VE done that, YOU sit down with YOUR buddies and sort it through till someone rises above the bloody heap and claims the victory of the truth. The truth is out there guys and gals. It’s a little harder to find these days, but we believe it is out there.

Sadly, 90% of Americans are getting all
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Remarks for annual meeting, 2004

By Nate Aalgaard, executive director

I was thinking, “Wouldn’t it be interesting if every two or four years we had to run for election for our own job?” We would have to come up with a plan to improve things in the future, and defend what we had done in the past. Wouldn’t that be fun? And you think you’re sick of politics now!

So in the spirit of this political season, I would like to tell you what I feel is the vision for Freedom Resource Center— what I think we should be known for as an organization. In other words, this is my platform for Freedom. I’d like to boil it down to three simple points that can really encompass everything we do. Those would be information, personal choice, and systems change.

First of all, we should be the number-one source for all kinds of disability-related information within our service area. You’ve probably heard the saying, “Information is power.” Well, that is certainly true in the confusing world of disability. There’s no way you can play the game, so to speak, much less hope to win, if you don’t know the rules. I think that probably the most common thing we hear from people when we do needs assessments is that they simply don’t know what’s out there for them or who to call. It can be a very frustrating experience.

My vision would be that whenever anybody has a question about disability rights, accommodations for work, or adaptations to your home or other environments you would call Freedom. You would instantly look for our number when you want to know what services are out there for yourself, your friend, or a member of your family

who has a disability. And you would look to us for recent news about disability-related legislation, issues, and information about anything from health, to education, to transportation and more.

I really believe that Freedom is in a unique situation because of our cross-disability focus to be available to anyone seeking information of any kind. A friend of mine who ran a convenience store used to say jokingly, “If we don’t have it, you don’t need it.” Our motto might be, “If we can’t find it, it’s not there.”

In order to get our name out there to people and to provide the best information possible, we’re doing a few basic things. Over the past year or so our staff have made many visits to all kinds of agencies, schools, senior centers, and nursing homes. We are also in the process of developing new brochures and a poster that we can distribute to let people know who we are. And, we have started an in-house database.

For the second part of my platform, I want to us to be known as a place where anybody with a disability who wants to take more control of his or her life can come for information, support, training, and help in developing a workable plan to make it happen. In the Independent Living movement, we believe that people with disabilities should have the same kinds of opportunities and choices as anyone else. This movement was started by people who were denied that choice, the basic choice of going to college and living in the same place that other students lived. It was continued by people all over the country and now, indeed, the world, who realized that they were not the problem. They didn’t need to be fixed, because there was nothing really wrong with them. What was wrong was the system. It was the environment that needed to be changed.

When people come to Freedom Resource Center with an issue, they see and talk to other people with disabilities, some of whom have been through the same thing. We have credibility, by who we are and what we stand for. I’ve been there myself. It’s been 27 years since I became a person with a disability. But I can recall vividly the frustration of not being able to get in and out of my own house, take a shower, or get around on my own outside. I didn’t have a clue about what my civil rights were or how to manage the benefit programs that I was on. I relied on my family for everything. Sometimes it felt like I was in it all by myself. Many of the other people who work or volunteer at the Center have experienced similar circumstances.

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In the effort to provide better services to individuals who want to take control of their lives; we continue to recruit and train qualified employees and mentors, many of whom are people with disabilities. It's all about the people, and everyone here at Freedom is a valuable part of that team effort.

The third area where I would really see Freedom focusing is systems change. This is probably the most difficult one to do. But I believe it is the most important for the long-term benefit of people with disabilities. People with disabilities have a long history in this country of not being treated equally. We've come a long way and we have many good laws and policies to help us to be as productive and independent as we want to be. But we still have quite a ways to go. There are still far too many people with disabilities who do not have a job, live in poverty, or have inadequate access to housing, transportation or healthcare.

In the past few years we have worked on laws to give civil rights protection in the private sector and in public services to all people regardless of whether they have a disability. Just think: what if there were no interpreters, or ramps, or requirements for Braille or other types of accessible communication.

We have worked on policies within Social Security that can help people keep health care when they go to work. And we are currently working on a very big and important project along with people throughout the country to help change the system so that anybody who needs long-term services and support can get those in the home of their choice without being forced into an institution.

As we work in this field, it is going to take a long-term one-on-one effort to educate people on what we want, what we need, and the potential benefits to all of society. That's why we are out there so much; working on committees, visiting legislators, and sending out information. This is where everyone can help. You can vote for candidates who are committed to work for positive change for people with disabilities. And you can be an advocate wherever you go, so that together we can make a long-term and lasting change in our community, our state, our country, and even the world.

So that's my platform — my vision for Freedom Resource Center. I'm asking for your vote.

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their information from 30-second sound bites. Both sides are slinging more mud than a bunch of five-year-olds in their favorite mud hole, which, we might add, may show more fair play than the current political game.

This country is split right down the middle. A percentage point here, a percentage point there, it really doesn't matter if one side gets 46% and the other side gets 47%, it's still a toss up. One has to wonder how we got to this crossroads, and where we're going after the direction has been decided. For the disability community, we have had to fight for what we got with every administration that has come to power. We have had to fight to hold on to what we have with every administration. We've heard the promises from both sides, and we have had to hold them accountable for the promises they've made, on all levels of government- local, state and federal.

Once people understand what the Independent Living Philosophy is all about, it doesn't matter where they sit on the political spectrum. Everyone can understand the value of people having acceptable choices about where they live or where they can go; or having the opportunity to make a living, and be a productive member of their community. That's what anybody in this country, whether experiencing the disability or not, has the right to expect. So, Independent Living should not be a partisan political issue. It's a basic human rights issue.

The disability community is an equal opportunity community. We don't care what color you are, we don't care what country you're from, we don't care if you're a conservative or a liberal, democrat or republican, we don't even care whether you're a girl or a boy! We do care, however, that you are part of our community, and we do care how that community is treated and perceived in the world.

In an attempt to reduce the cost of mailings please send us your e-mail addresses to freedom@freedomrc.org. Or If you would like to be removed from our mailing list please call 701-478-0459 or 1-800-450-0459.

Consumer Stories...

September 22, 2004

Dear Freedom Resource Center,

Recently our 27-year-old son Jason, who has Learning Disabilities and all the hurdles that follow with having a disability, wanted to move forward to the next phase in his life. We have been in team meetings with Jason his whole life. As in anybody's life, Jason has met a young lady, Michelle, who also has LD issues. As their relationship matured, they would now like to be married. As easy as this may sound, Michelle lives in Moorhead, MN and Jason lives in Fargo, ND. Now the hurdle to meld their lives and continue to receive support, without losing their assistance, has begun.

We have been in Michelle's support meetings for 2 years, discussing how to merge their lives. The team meetings became deadlocked because of the two living in different states and receiving services in two different states. After many meetings and much debate it was decided that the best choice was to move Jason to Minnesota and keep Michelle's support system intact.

Looking for solution options, we asked our daughter-in-law who had once worked for Social Services in Clay County, what she would suggest our next step be. Kylah suggested we contact Freedom Resource Center in Fargo.

We contacted Freedom Resource Center and had a meeting set with Scott Burlingame immediately. After completing the needed paperwork, Scott, with the assistance of Bobbi Jo, became team members and

advocates in merging Jason and Michelle's lives. Scott and Bobbi Jo have enthusiastically attended many meetings and moved our goals forward to completion.

In addition to Scott and Bobbi Jo's personal participation, they have made available classes for Jason and Michelle that include;

- * budgets
- * food on a budget
- * bus transportation
- * apartment living

These classes are part of the success of Jason and Michelle's life together.

Sincerely,

Lon and Cindy Arnhold



What's Wrong With This Picture?

The designated accessible parking area lacks a stable, firm, and slip-resistant route, which jams the ramp and prevents our driver from getting out of the van.



An Introduction to Universal Design



The Principles of Universal Design and their guidelines were developed by a group of architects, product designers, engineers, and environmental design researchers as part of a project coordinated by the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University. The seven principles that describe characteristics that make designs universally usable are:

1. **The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.** (Equitable Use)
2. **The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.** (Flexibility in Use)
3. **Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.** (Simple and Intuitive Use)
4. **The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.** (Perceptible Information)
5. **The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.** (Tolerance for Error)
6. **The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.** (Low Physical Effort)
7. **Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.** (Size and Space for Approach and Use)

Freedom Resource Center is in the process of developing Universal Design training for homeowners and the homebuilding industry. We will also be developing Universal Design resources on the Freedom Resource Center web page (www.freedomrc.org).

Voter Rules and Regulations with a little Registration thrown in

Minnesota:

For those of you who don't know, or just can't seem to bring yourself to travel to the polls, you are required to register to vote in Minnesota. Unfortunately, by the time you read this the deadline will have passed. So, here's what you need to do:

You can register at your polling place on election day. You will need one of the following to verify your residence.

- Minnesota driver's license, learner's permit, identification card, or receipt for one, with your current address
- Tribal ID where authorized, with your current address
- If the Minnesota license or ID has a former address, you may bring a recent utility bill to use with your license
- "Notice of Late Registration" postcard
- U.S. passport with utility bill
- U.S. military photo ID card with utility bill

If you are a student, you can use...

- Student ID, registration, or fee statement with your current address
- Student photo ID with utility bill
- Student ID if you are on a student housing list on file at the polling place
- Someone who is registered in the precinct where you live who will vouch for your residence
- Note: The utility bill must have your name, current address, and be due within 30 days of the election. Utility bills may be for electric, gas, water, solid waste, sewer, telephone, or cable TV.

In North Dakota the ID requirements are:

Acceptable forms of identification must include a street address. PO Boxes do not establish residency and

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From the transition corner ...

Never forget... “Nothing for youth, without youth.” It is important for us at Freedom to hear the voices of our youth, embracing their views and opinions and assisting them as we can in this transition process. In the days ahead, we will provide you with ongoing information from our youth as well as resources that specifically address youth issues.

One resource that youth, families and providers may be interested in is KASA. Kids As Self Advocates. KASA provides an on-line newsletter with wonderful resources, a website for youth with special needs, opportunities to share their stories and insights and network with other youth. You can find this resource at www.fvkasa.org

In this newsletter we have a featured article by (drum roll please.....)Taylor S. and Tyler H
Thanks Taylor and Tyler for sharing with us!

I think the most difficult thing in the school setting is that since people with Asperger’s Syndrome, like me, think differently than other people. I have a huge memory at the expense of good social skills. I also think in images, unlike most people, who think in words. That gives me trouble because I learn by seeing, and not hearing.

I think the most helpful thing in the school setting is the help I get to compensate for my problems. My advice to other people with Asperger’s is that you may have trouble but your great memory is a huge gift you can use. Just as Thomas Jefferson, Charles Darwin, and Bill Gates did (do), as they have Asperger’s. **Taylor S.**

The most difficult thing for me about having a disability is trying to concentrate. A lot of things distract me. People walking by or people talking can catch my attention easily. It is easier working with my hands because I can be more active.

One of the most helpful things is getting help from the teachers so they can help me do what I need. The resource room helps me out with a lot of things. Some advice I have for others is that if they need help you should ask. Don’t start to fall behind before you ask for help.

Tyler H.

Ask Bob?

Question:

I have been having health problems for many years and I have recently been diagnosed with fibromyalgia. The problem is that my family, friends and employer do not understand it. Can you help me to defend myself?

Answer:

Hidden disabilities are frequently misunderstood. It is easier for people who haven’t experienced your situation to act as if it is not as severe as it may be. FMS (fibromyalgia syndrome) is a widespread musculoskeletal pain and fatigue disorder for which the cause is still unknown. Fibromyalgia means pain in the muscles, ligaments, and tendons – the soft fibrous tissues in the body. It is very common for CFS (chronic fatigue syndrome) to accompany FMS. In the medical arena, it seems that fibromyalgia is becoming more accepted and acknowledged. Certain tests are needed to determine if an individual has fibromyalgia, Multiple Sclerosis or some other type of condition that is causing their health to deteriorate. Having your diagnosis is half the battle. The other half is learning to take care of yourself. To help your family and friends relate to your condition, have them think back to the last time they had a bad flu. Every muscle in their body shouted out in pain. In addition, they felt devoid of energy as though someone had unplugged their power supply. There are numerous resources that you may provide to the people in your life to help them understand. The Fibromyalgia Network website offers great information, and the staff here at Freedom would be happy to help you learn more.

Freedom Resource Center and/or its Board of Directors do not necessarily endorse or support any of the views expressed within the personal testimonies within this newsletter, with the exception of those specifically so attributed.

Get Out and Vote ! November 2

DISABILITIES AWARENESS WEEK—OCTOBER 10-16, 2004

By Ruth E. Ulvog

The second week in October is set aside as Disabilities Awareness Week. Nearly everyone has some sort of disability. Most individuals with disabilities go virtually unnoticed—those who wear corrective lenses in the form of glasses or contact lenses, hearing devices, prosthetic devices such as special shoes or shoe inserts—the list goes on and on. For the most part, these disabilities are not debilitating or life changing. They are widely accepted as a “normal” part of life.

Other disabilities are far more obvious, debilitating and life changing. Some are visible; others are not easily visible. Those disabilities that are not immediately noticeable are often described as “hidden.” Individuals with the most visible disabilities are those individuals who require assistance with mobility. Assistive devices range from canes and walkers to motorized conveyances such as scooters and wheelchairs. Those with invisible or hidden disabilities are often ignored because prevailing thought patterns indicate that if one is ambulatory without the need for any form of mobility assistance they are “normal” and can’t possibly have any kind of disability. Individuals with hidden disabilities often find themselves in situations that fall into the category of “out of sight, out of mind.” Such attitudes are not only discriminatory; they can be debilitating to the entire community, whether or not individual members have disabilities.

As responsible citizens it is incumbent upon us to learn about disabilities for the benefit of all, for we never know when we ourselves may be affected by one or more disabilities. It is an all-too-familiar refrain, “There, but for the Grace of God, go I.” There are numerous books available about many differing kinds and types of disabilities. Most are written in the “first person” because it is the individual with the disability who is sharing his or her story, and just how their lives and the lives of their community are affected, whether it is the individual’s immediate family, community of faith, or an entire town or city. A recently published book, *Blindsided by Grace: Entering the World of Disability*, by Robert F. Molsberry, has special significance because the Senior Pastor of the UCC in Grinnell, Iowa writes it. Other books on the very

broad subject of disabilities include “Staring Back: The Disability Experience from the Inside Out,” edited by Kenny Fries (includes experiences of a number of individuals with different kinds and types of disabilities, and previously reviewed in *Becoming*); “Lucky Man: A Memoir” by Michael J. Fox; “Waist-High in the World: A Life among the Nondisabled” by Nancy Mairs; *Dancing with Disabilities: Opening the Church to All God’s Children* by Brett Webb-Mitchell; “Still Me” and “Nothing is Impossible: Reflections on a New Life,” both by Christopher Reeve.

Although Disabilities Awareness Week is a special week designated to call attention to disabilities, this is an all-encompassing, daily challenge for all members of society. It is a daily challenge for those who live with disabilities, “24/7,” and should be a “24/7” challenge for those who are fortunate enough to not be encumbered. As professed Christians we try to “live Christmas, year ‘round.” Why not live Disabilities Awareness Week “year ‘round,” too?

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CANNOT be accepted. Acceptable forms of identification with residential addresses are:

- Valid Drivers License
- Valid State Identification Card
- Valid Federally Issued Identification Card:
(1) Passport (2) Agency Identification Card
- Valid Tribal Government Issued Identification Card
- Valid Student Identification Card
- Valid United States Military Identification Card
- Utility bill dated 30 days prior to election day with name and residential address
- Change of address verification letter from the US Postal Service

If you do not have one of the forms of identification listed above,

You still have the right to vote if:

- An election poll worker is able to vouch for your identity and residence.
- You complete a Voter’s Affidavit on which you certify, under oath, your identity and that you are a resident within this precinct.

Now, this is a relatively painless process, and requires only a small amount of energy to complete. So, please exercise your right, **Get Out And Vote.**

Freedom Resource Center for Independent Living, Inc.
2701 9th Ave. SW.
Fargo, ND 58103

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Return Service Requested

Citizen Advocate Sign-up Form

Yes! I'd like to become a Citizen Advocate and make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities in Minnesota or North Dakota.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Day phone: _____

Night Phone: _____

Email: _____

I am a
 Person with disability Family member Professional

Issues that are important to me:

- Public awareness
- Education
- Legislation
- Other: _____

Please return the form to:
Chuck Stebbins
Freedom Resource Center
2701 9th Avenue S
Fargo, ND 58103
For more information: 701-478-0459 or 800-450-0459.
Or email Chuck at chucks@freedomrc.org



*Freedom's 2004
Volunteer of the Year
Award Goes to...
David Shove*



*Freedom's 2004
Advocate of the Year
Award Goes to...
Tom Thompson*

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