

THE

Independent

A Publication of Freedom Resource Center for Independent Living, Inc.

APRIL 2017

FYI

Moorhead

Freedom In Action: Plantable Seed Paper

Thursday, April 20, 2017

1:30-3:30 pm

Eventide Community Room - Moorhead

Call Tiffany to register 218-512-1101. Free. Space limited.

Jamestown

Get Smart on SCAMS

Thursday, April 27, 2017

1:30 – 3:30 pm

James River Senior Center

Free. Call Beth at 701-252-4693 to register.

Wahpeton

Mindfulness: Eat. Love. Relax

Tuesday, May 2, 2017

1:00 – 3:00 pm

Hughes Shelter, Wahpeton

To register call Joyce at 701-672-1648.

Moorhead/Fargo

Freedom In Action: Red River Zoo

Friday, May 12, 2017

1:00 pm

Call Tiffany to register at 218-512-1101. Free. Space limited.

It's Time To Give Back

Dan Holte is obviously a people person. Born and raised in Parkers Prairie, Minnesota, Dan, 61, got his first job out of high school as a bricklayer in Minneapolis. After two years, he moved to Moorhead. He got a job at Border States Electric, but that was not exactly what he wanted to do. Having been friends with his barber back home, he decided to attend barber college.

Dan spent 22 years working as a barber. He had many loyal customers, including Fargo's former mayor, Dennis Walaker, members of the police force, and other city officials. He hated to give it up, but carpal tunnel syndrome took over. Dan then switched careers and managed a furniture store from 1997-2013. Again, this job allowed him to have contact with people, which he loved.

Dan started having trouble with his eye. His local doctors and optometrist couldn't figure out what was wrong, so he went to Rochester. In mid-2013, after five days of tests at the Mayo Clinic, he was diagnosed with Myasthenia gravis (MG). They said he could have had the disease for years.



Sue and Dan Holte

Myasthenia gravis is characterized by weakness and rapid fatigue of any of the muscles under your voluntary control. It is caused by a breakdown in the normal communication between nerves and muscles. There is no cure for MG, but treatment can help relieve signs and symptoms, such as weakness of arm or leg muscles, double vision, drooping eyelids, and difficulties with speech, chewing, swallowing and breathing. (From the Mayo Clinic website)

It took Dan a while to come to grips with his disability. He was told very directly by his doctor that there was no cure for MG and that

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exercise, including strenuous work, would only make it worse. Stubborn Norwegian that he is, Dan ignored his doctor's advice and kept working for another year. After falling four times he finally gave it up. Now, he has good days when he can drive and do other things; and he has days when that is not possible. Sensitivity to light is one of the most troublesome issues for Dan.

"My biggest block was being seen as disabled. It's the first time I've ever associated with people with disabilities," Dan said. "Seeing a counselor has been very helpful. I got over feeling sorry for myself. She had to get tough with me about applying for Social Security, which I did not want to do. I wanted to work and support myself, but she said, 'You've paid into it all these years. It's there for you!'"

Dan credits his wife, Sue, for all the support and help she has given him. "She's my rock," he said. "She's unbelievable. Her life has changed dramatically. She's had to drive; be my caretaker." In fact, Dan and Sue have a paper route, which starts at 4 a.m. seven days a week. If Dan isn't physically up to doing it, Sue does it alone.

"When I first met Dan and Sue, they were looking for resources for caretakers," said Paula Short, Freedom's Peer Mentoring Specialist. "Their goal was to find other people like them."

They are now part of a couples' group that gets together regularly at Freedom to talk about their situation, where one spouse is reliant on the other for personal care. They now want to help others. Dan will be one of the speakers at Freedom's Appreciation Luncheon. "I want to surround myself with positive people. I want to contribute, give back, and be the best person I can be," he said.

From Where I Sit

Do you dislike your job, or where you volunteer, or the organization you are a member of? If so, you are probably in the majority. How tragic. Just think how much time we spend doing things we don't find fulfilling. It's time we will never get back.

In an article in USA Today from June 30, 2013, Kelli B. Grant writes that a Gallup poll of over 150,000 workers found that only 30 percent of them were engaged and inspired at work and over 52 percent were present, but not particularly excited about their job.

I don't know what to call it — fate, luck, destiny, or whatever; but I'm in the right job. It certainly didn't enter my mind to become a disability rights advocate and nonprofit organization director when I was growing up a farm boy in northwestern Minnesota. However, because of where I went to college, the people I met, and my own sense of social justice, I ended up here. Has it been easy and smooth? No. But I stuck with it and with help from all sorts of people along the way it has somehow worked out.

When we hire people to work at Freedom we look for people who want THIS JOB, the one we have to offer, and not just any job. We call it having the right person in the right seat on the bus. The same goes for our volunteers and board members. We don't always get it right, but I think we have been doing a pretty good job of it lately.

It seems the main reason we have lost good employees lately is job security. With our reliance on government



Nate Aalgaard,
Executive Director

funding, both state and federal, programs come and go. In Minnesota, we have hired two new employees and will soon add another—all focused on giving people with disabilities more options and tools to be successfully employed in jobs they want and enjoy. On the other hand, in North Dakota, the Money Follows the Person program is set to end by December 31, 2018. This is the hard reality of any type of business.

But for the most part things are going well. On May 9, we will celebrate another year of success in the areas of volunteerism, advocacy, and service to Freedom Resource Center. We call it our Appreciation Luncheon and it is one of my absolute favorite events. This year we added a recognition for Peer Mentor of the Year. Mentors volunteer their time to assist someone else in accomplishing goals for greater independence.

If you are looking for a fun, rewarding experience, get a ticket from one of our staff or board members. Come out and celebrate with a group of people who are on the right bus, in the right seat!

Home Access Program: Living Fully at Home

Freedom Resource Center's Home Access Program is part of an array of services designed around the goal of helping people with disabilities live in their homes and communities as long as possible. When you choose our Home Access Program, we come to your home to meet with you in person. We evaluate your home for accessibility, safety and ease of use for you.

Home modifications can enhance comfort, increase safety, prevent accidents and facilitate ongoing access to community activities and services. These environmental adjustments remove barriers and safety hazards, which alleviates stress associated with reduced physical capability. Increased home access can even prevent placement in a nursing facility.

What kind of home modifications can be done?

The program may provide home entry and bathroom accessibility modifications for individuals with physical disabilities, depending on funding. Freedom can also help identify other possible funding sources for the modifications.

We can assist with a wide variety of information and basic modifications that increase the accessibility in your home and enhance the independence of one or more of your family members with a disability. The modifications are designed with the individual in mind and may include ramps, grab bars, or kitchen and bathroom modifications.

For more information, contact Jerry Christiansen at 1-800-450-0459.



Section 504: A Short Law With a Long Reach



Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is an American civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. In fact, it was one of the first U.S. civil rights laws offering protection for people with disabilities.

Thanks to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, people with disabilities have the right to:

- Accessible public buildings
- A public education alongside nondisabled peers, without extra costs or put into “separate but equal” schools

- Freedom from discrimination in federal employment and related benefits
- Freedom from discrimination in federal housing, healthcare and other assistance programs

Without Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, there would be no Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The 1973 Act served as a template for the more comprehensive law passed in 1990. Section 504 gave ADA advocates evidence that disability rights could benefit many without adding a huge burden on society.

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**“Helping people with disabilities live
more independently over 25 years”**

Go to www.freedomrc.org
& click




**6TH ANNUAL
Appreciation
Luncheon**

Delta by Marriott
(formerly Ramada Plaza Hotel & Conference Center)
1635 42nd St. S • Fargo, ND

MAY 9th, 2017 • 12:00 to 1:30pm

Join us for our 6th Annual Appreciation Luncheon as we honor our amazing volunteers, people who stand up for disability rights and employers who are supporters of employing people with disabilities.

**Call us at 800.450.0459
Tickets only \$20**

Proudly helping people with disabilities live more independently for over 25 years.

What's Wrong With This Picture?

Dealing with high beds in hotel rooms is a frequent problem for travelers with physical disabilities. This so-called accessible hotel room has beds that are considerably higher than the standard height of a wheelchair seat, making it difficult to get into. Some people require mechanical lifts to transfer in and out of bed, which need room under the bed. There are no standards for the height of hotel beds, but the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) is proposing 17 inches to 23 inches. In addition, this room does not have a wide enough path of travel to the heater. It should be at least 32 inches wide.

