

THE

Independent

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

JANUARY 2016

FYI

Freedom In Action: Prayer Flags

1:00-3:00pm

Thursday, January 28, 2016

Freedom Resource Center-Fargo office

2701 9th Ave S, Fargo, ND

Call Wanda at 701-478-0459

to register (free)

Freedom In Action: Valentine Votive Candle Craft

1:00-2:30pm

Tuesday, February 2, 2016

Optimist Shelter – Wahpeton Park

Call Joyce at 701-672-1648 by

January 25 to register (free)

LW 101: Independence Orientation

3:30-5:30pm, Thursday

January 28, 2016

Freedom Resource Center-

Fergus Falls office

Conference Room #3 -

125 West Lincoln Ave

Call Tanya at 218-998-1799

to register (free)

Freedom In Action: Prayer/Meditation Flags

1:30-3:00 PM, February 2, 2016

& March 1, 2016

Legacy Place -

419 5th St NE Jamestown ND

Call Beth at 701-252-4693 to

register (free)

Ramp Program Provides Quick Home Access

There are times when a temporary ramp can keep someone from having to move to a nursing facility. At other times it means a safer entry into the home; and sometimes it allows a person to enjoy special occasions with their family.

Freedom has a stock of ramps that can be installed quite quickly at any time of the year. Jerry Christiansen is Freedom's Accessibility Specialist. He will take the information he gets from Freedom staff, the homeowner, or an agency referral and make an assessment of the home. He often starts by looking up the property on Google Earth. "It's amazing how much it helps to be able to look at the property before you go out to the home," he said. "You can tell the area you have to work with, the approximate height of the steps, and how much ramp will be needed."

When on site, Jerry visits with the homeowner to find out what they need. He works with them to install the ramp with both usability and safety in mind. The ramps come with handrails and multiple sections can be hooked together for higher entrances.



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Nancy Brandt, 79, recently used one of Freedom's ramps for a couple of months. She lives alone on the shores of Otter Tail Lake in a cabin that has been in her husband's family since 1948. She has no intention of leaving anytime soon. Nancy had the misfortune of breaking her left leg in September 2015. After an MRI revealed the seriousness of the problem, she was told by the orthopedic specialist to put no weight on that leg. So, she used a wheelchair to get around. Unfortunately her home was not accessible.

"The very next day after my home health worker called, (Freedom) Jerry came and put up the ramp. He did a wonderful job of securing it to my deck," Nancy said. So after a month of staying in her house, Nancy could now get in and out independently and get to her appointments. Nancy greatly appreciates the independence the ramp gave her. "It doesn't get slippery, and it has side rails you can hang onto and feel secure," she said. With her leg mostly healed, Nancy no longer needs the ramp and Jerry took it down and installed it at another home.

Freedom has a limited number of ramps. They are loaned out on a first-come, first-served basis. Portable ramps can't solve every situation, but they are a good alternative for someone who may only need a ramp for a short time or who is facing going to a nursing facility if they can't get in and out of their house. If someone needs a more permanent ramp, Freedom will work with them to find resources to fund and/or construct one.

From Where I Sit

The vehicle Grinch almost stole my Christmas. A couple days before the holiday I noticed my van wasn't putting out much heat. With the mild weather this fall I hadn't noticed. But when things turned colder, it just didn't keep me warm enough. And I HATE being cold.

The shop squeezed me in late afternoon on December 23. Things were fine on the way home, but the next day on my way to work the heat gauge went all the way over to hot. I had visions of smoke and steam pouring out from under the hood as I flew down I-94. Fortunately that did not happen.

I called my mechanic, Tim Toso, and told him the problem. He offered to meet me at the shop, Valley Alignment, even though they were closed for the holiday. He spent an hour and a half on Christmas Eve working on my van so I could enjoy the day with my family. I was extremely thankful for his kindness.

I thought about my options should I not be able to use my van. I can't just call up anyone for a ride. They might be able to get me into their vehicle, but my 300-pound wheelchair is another matter entirely. I know a handful of people who also have accessible vans, but how many of them would be able to accommodate my wishes on Christmas Eve?

Many of us who use power wheelchairs have had them suddenly stop working. Hopefully there is someone around to help you get to the repair shop or into your spare chair—that is if you have one in good working condition. My chair quit on me last March when I was at the Capitol in Bismarck. Now that will cause some anxiety!

What if you use an electric wheelchair and are out late and can't or shouldn't drive? There are no wheelchair accessible taxis in Fargo-Moorhead.

Here's a few items on my wish list for the coming year: First, accessible taxi service. The City of Minot passed an ordinance mandating that cab companies have at least one vehicle that can accommodate passengers using wheelchairs. If they can do it, so can other cities.

I'd like to see a 24/7 emergency service for wheelchair repair. It's hard to plan breakdowns between 8 am and 5 pm weekdays. I just heard a radio ad for a towing company that will start your car or change a flat tire anytime, day or night. If it can be done for cars, it can be done for wheelchairs.

Then there's accessible parking and snow removal. Get those spots marked correctly, and keep the snow off them. And we need more people like

Tim Toso, who are willing to go the extra mile to make sure someone like me has a vehicle that works.



Nate Aalgaard,
Executive Director

BOARD MEMBER FEATURE:

Charlene Ota

Charlene Ota lived in Hawaii for several years. She grew up on a farm in the Clifford/Galesburg area of North Dakota, and when the time was right she made the choice to come home. Some might find this decision confusing. Leave “paradise” to live here in the frozen north country? But she had good reasons. She wanted to re-connect with her family, the cost of living is lower, and she missed the four seasons -- even winter. Her husband Milton, a native Hawaiian, wanted to move here too. He had talked about moving to the mainland when he retired.

Charlene has cousins who design and build homes. They had a home designed and built in Fargo ready for them to move in when they got to town in 2012. “One thing we wanted was for it to be fairly accessible. We know people who use wheelchairs and we might need it ourselves someday,” she said.

Charlene and Milton met at an American Council of the Blind convention in North Carolina in 1995. They were married in 1999 and made their home in Hawaii. Milton worked for the State Library. Charlene worked for the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, teaching Braille and computer applications. She later worked at the Hawaii Center for Independent Living. Now she works 24 hours a week at Minnesota Relay in Moorhead.

Even though the Center in Hawaii and Freedom Resource Center were both federally funded and operated under the same regulations, there were differences. “We did a lot with housing. I was about the only staff person out in the community advocating for the needs of people with disabilities,” Charlene said. “We were asked to be on a lot of committees for our input. One thing I like about Freedom is we get people out of nursing homes. The Center in Hawaii didn’t do that, partly because of the culture.”

Charlene chose to join Freedom’s Board because she believes in the philosophy of Independent Living. She had been a board member at the Center in Hawaii before working there. “I like to be involved with all disabilities, not just my own,” she said. “It’s exciting to see people be in charge of their own lives and be part of the community.”

Shortly after she moved to Fargo, Charlene sought out services and came across Freedom. She and Deanna Bakken, one of the Peer Mentors, spent some time together at West Acres Shopping Center so Charlene could learn where things were located. She navigates Fargo-Moorhead with the help of her guide dog, a Black Lab named Irish, They have been together since 2008. Charlene has participated in several Freedom In Action events. “I like to learn something new, and have the social interaction with other people,” she said.

“Coming to North Dakota was a good move for us,” Charlene said. “Milton is involved with the Lions Club, we have a church we like, and friends. It was a really good move.”



Freedom offers Aging in Place Service

By Jerry Christiansen

I attended a training session in Olympia Washington November 11 through 13 presented by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB.) I earned the designation of Certified Aging In Place Specialist (CAPS.) As we age, we often develop disabilities that make living in our home difficult. The NAHB recognized that many people prefer living in their own home instead of in a care center or nursing home. In response to this, NAHB developed the CAPS program.

As a CAPS my job is to work with the consumer to determine what is needed so they can live at home and be safe. In many cases a home survey will be done and information will be gathered from the consumer and the caregivers involved. When making a person’s home accessible the ADA Standards can be an excellent reference, but they do not have to be followed. A person’s home needs to be made accessible for them. A person doesn’t need to wait until they have a disability or they are “aged” to prepare their home for “Living In Place”. If you have questions or would like me to survey your home, give me a call at 1-800-450-0459.

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

Go to www.freedomrc.org
& click



Giving Hearts Day
impactgiveback.org
February 11, 2016

What’s Wrong With This Picture?

The sidewalk is on the left side of the fire hydrant and the snow is cleared on the right side of the hydrant. Apparently the equipment used to clear the snow is too wide to fit between the hydrant and a light pole that isn’t shown in the picture. In this case, a person does not need to wade through 4 inch deep snow. But, the snow covered grass will have a hard time meeting the “firm, stable and slip-resistant” requirement of the Standards for Accessible Design. There is also a small step between the grass and the concrete.

