

# the Independent

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

August 2014

## Painting a Brighter Future

Falling into a cycle of bad habits can have a life changing effect on our bodies and our minds. Habits come in many forms. For example, we may forego the gym for a television show or salad for a pizza. For 31 year old Margaret Speer of Moorhead it was years of substance abuse that led to major bone deterioration and a new barrier to overcome.



Margaret Speer

"I was an addict for at least five years," Margaret said. "My daily intake during that time caused my bones to deteriorate specifically near my major joints," she continued "I actually just recently had a hip replaced." The surgery went well and Margaret has made a good recovery.

For her addiction challenges Margaret began treatment but quickly learned not all types of recovery programs are the same. "It really depends on the individual, what works for others wasn't working for me," she said. "Programs where they told you what you had to do wasn't working for me. But then I began the Smart Recovery program with Randy Stetson." Stetson, a

former Freedom Resource Center employee helped Margaret successfully begin the road to recovery.

**"Without LaDonna and Freedom Resource Center this wouldn't be possible."**

Along with Smart Recovery, Margaret was looking for further guidance. "I found a Freedom Resource Center brochure somewhere and remembered Randy saying he'd worked there before. I was interested in receiving mentorship through the Peer Mentor program," Speer commented. Transportation had become an issue because of her bone deterioration and Margaret was having a difficult time receiving assistance with Social Security. Margaret quickly learned Freedom Resource Center could play an instrumental role in helping her find the assistance she needed.

While waiting for a peer mentor, Speer was introduced to Ladonna Korstad, Independent Living Advocate for Moorhead and the two quickly began working on her assistance through Social Security. "She helped me find the right place for assistance, Schneider Law Firm, and really turned things around for me," Margaret said, "Without LaDonna and Freedom Resource Center this wouldn't be possible."

While working with Freedom Resource Center to remove additional barriers to her independence, Margaret learned about the "Art of Freedom" a new annual event that displays people's artistic talents while the community learns about our free services. "I had been doing art for a few years as therapy

and thought about participating." Margaret paints abstract oil and acrylic pieces. "I was recently told by a friend that I hoard my art and need to get it out and show others so I displayed at the 'Art of Freedom' last year. I'm already registered for this year's show," she concluded.

"Margaret is a vibrant, smart, and creative person who has been through many ups and downs," LaDonna said. "Recently, she has signed on to be a peer mentor and plans to use art as a social medium."

Speer is now going back to school in Moorhead to become a paralegal. Her focus is on self-empowerment and recovery for those who may have similar experiences to her own. Beyond her studies and role as a peer mentor, she is busy giving back in so many other ways including participating on the Lost and Found Ministries' event committee. A co-facilitator for the Smart Recovery program, she just completed her training to be a facilitator of the program on her own.

"I've spoken to clients at Prairie St. John and various women's support groups," Speer stated, "eventually I'm hoping things work out to be a more frequent presenter to help others in need. I get goose bumps just thinking about it."

While she continues to grow and give back, Margaret is still creating beautiful works of art. She recently had a booth at the Art in the Park event. "For nearly 2 years I've wanted my art displayed," she said, "I believe in November and December of this year it will be on display at the Red Raven in Fargo."

As we continue to partner with Margaret to help her gain independence we look forward to seeing her confidence grow with her newest works of art at this year's "Art of Freedom" on October 23rd at the Dakota Medical Foundation building.



Margaret's painting

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# INSIDE

# A Partner in the Classroom



*School bus*

As school buses get tuned up and you begin shopping for the newest classroom needs, Freedom Resource Center wants to remind you we are here to be a partner in the classroom. Freedom Resource Center staff have a variety of experiences in ensuring your child or student receives the free and appropriate education everyone is

entitled to. The information that follows are just a few of the free services we provide for you as a student, parent, administrator, or teacher.

## Individual Education Plans (IEP)

Freedom Resource Center's Independent Living Advocates assist in the IEP process. Our advocates can provide the valuable, neutral voice in the planning process while focusing on what is best for the student to receive an appropriate education. We understand the IEP process can be challenging and cumbersome. With our help both the school and the parent can work towards the shared goal of educating students equally.



*South Fargo High School*

## Transition Services

It is never too early to begin planning for the next stage in your students' growth. If your student is nearing the end of their primary school education it is especially important to plan living arrangements and options



*Students and teachers in a classroom*

for further education or employment. Our Independent Living Advocates can assist you in planning for the future and transitioning into the next exciting stage for your student. Transitioning can be a difficult process; don't go through it alone. Freedom Resource Center staff are here to help provide a neutral prospective.

## Disability Awareness

Many students, teachers, and parents may have questions related to disability. Some people aren't sure how to treat another person who has a disability or want to know how best to accommodate their needs. Freedom Resource Center provides free disability awareness for students so everyone is comfortable and treated equally. It's okay to ask appropriate questions; Freedom Resource Center is here to answer your disability-related questions.



*Students learning*

## An Expert in Disability

If you have any questions regarding accessibility or reasonable accommodations, Freedom Resource Center is your local expert. Our staff are experienced and professional to meet the needs of the student yearning to learn. As always, our services are free. Give us a call today.

## EYI

### Paracord Bracelets

Learn how to make one. Can be used not only for fashion but for hiking, camping, or any other rope necessity activity.

Where: Yunker Farm at 1201 28th Ave. N. Fargo—The Big Shelter by the dog shelter

When: Thursday, August 28th from 1:00 – 3:00 pm

Call Wanda by August 22nd to register at (701) 478-0459

### Mediation Training

Learn from an expert about different techniques to help relax and focus.

Where: Hughes Shelter, Wahpeton

When: August 28th at 1:30 pm

Call Joyce at 701-672-1648 to reserve your spot

### Cooking 101 Class

This class will begin on October 14th (every Tuesday) ending on December 2nd. We are partnering with NDSU Extension.

Time: 1:00 -3:00 pm in Wahpeton

Call Joyce for registration and more information.

### Fall Festival

Head to Rheault Farm [2902 25th St S, Fargo] for a ton of Fall fun! Arts & crafts, carnival games, face painting, inflatable bounce house and so much more. Free admission [ticket purchase required for games and rides.]

When: Saturdays, September 20th & 27th from 10:00 am-5:00 pm

Sunday, September 21st & 28th from 12:00 -5:00 pm

Check out [www.fargoparks.com](http://www.fargoparks.com) for more details.

## From Where I Sit



*Nate Aalgaard, Executive Director*

I don't know who said it first, but there's a saying that goes, "When you get over the hill, speed up." Well, for me the past three months, it's done the opposite. I seem to be waiting endlessly for a couple of things to get back to what I used to call normal.

Previously in this column I mentioned using public transportation and having to wheel around the neighborhood. That continues due to a shoulder injury. I'm not able to drive because of weakness in the shoulder. I think making left turns is critical, and that's been the most difficult move to make.

Recovery started with several visits to the chiropractor and included treatments to loosen up the joint and decrease pain and muscle spasms. I started there because I could get there from my office without driving, and I could get in right away instead of wait

for two weeks for a physical therapy appointment.

After about three weeks of that my chiropractor suggested that the physical therapy route would give me some additional benefit. So I've been doing that now for about a month and am making slow but sure progress.

Meanwhile, when talking with my friends who have similar levels of quadriplegia, they encouraged me to go with low effort steering. It went something like: "It's a no-brainer, or you have to get it." Okay, I'm convinced. I'm all for it.

Ever since I was first injured and laying in the hospital 37 years ago my number one goal has been to drive. Driving equals freedom. It gives me the opportunity to go wherever and whenever I want. The summer after my initial injury and hospital rehabilitation, I ordered a set of hand controls. My brother installed them in my Grandma's car (with her permission) and we took off down the gravel roads around home. We stayed out of the ditches, and as I recall it went OK. Then I ordered a van and got it all set up with a lift and lowered floor. I practiced parallel parking with some stakes in the ground, went to take the driving test, and passed the first time. I was off and driving!

Adjusting my thinking to this new reality has been tough. It has been made significantly better by what I consider a pretty good paratransit

service here in Fargo-Moorhead. Sure it's not perfect. It doesn't run in Moorhead on Sunday, so getting to church has been a problem. You have to plan ahead and schedule rides in advance, and sometimes it takes a while to reach your destination because it's a ride share program, not a taxi.

And like the Beatles said, "You get by with a little help from your friends." I've got a few friends who pick me up and drive me around. Family members drive me in my own van to various functions, so I'm not stuck at home by any means.

So as I work on getting stronger, and explore my options with different steering mechanisms and/or a different van, I have a new appreciation for people who don't drive. It took me an entire afternoon to go to my PT appointment and a chiropractor visit. I don't just pop into the van and take off like I used to. And I also realize that getting places, especially out of town, is essential for the work I need to do. If I don't have a reliable mode of transportation I can't perform the essential functions of my job. Simple as that.

If I am anything it's persistent. I will beat this problem. It's taking a lot more time than I ever imagined, but I am determined to win this battle with "Over the Hill Syndrome."

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*If you would like to be removed from our mailing list please call 1-800-450-0459.*

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*Alternate formats available upon request.*

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*“Equal Choice,  
Equal Responsibility”*

Go to [www.freedomrc.org](http://www.freedomrc.org)  
& click



*2nd place Winner David Gangl*

## Call for Exhibitors

We are seeking exhibitors for the 2014 Art of Freedom event to be held on October 23rd at the Dakota Medical Foundation building in Fargo. We are asking for art of any form. We would love to see your artistic talent!

If you're interested in participating or have questions, call Freedom Resource Center at 800-450-0459. You do not need to be a professional artist. This event is for everyone.

## What's Wrong With This Picture?



The flower cart has been placed in the access aisle next to the accessible parking. Blocking the access aisle makes it difficult for people to utilize the ramp or lift on their vehicle.