Detroit Lakes Open House

Get to know us! Stop in our Detroit Lakes office on February 24th from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. for food, drink, and to learn about Freedom Resource Center’s services. We’re in the Washington Square Mall across from Maurice’s. Open Monday-Friday 9 to 4. Call us at 218-844-5880.

What’s Wrong With This Picture?

We know the US Postal Service is going broke, but the parking signs at Fargo’s Prairiewood Post Office need an upgrade.

According to ND Century Code: 39-01-15 (9), this is what an accessible parking sign should look like. Each parking spot must be indicated by blue paint on the curb or edge of the paved portion of the street or parking lot adjacent to the space. At least one spot needs to be van accessible. Each standard accessible parking space must have an adjacent 5 foot wide access aisle. Each van accessible parking space must have an adjacent 8 foot wide access aisle. Two parking spots may share an access aisle.

Exceeding My Own Expectations

Can you think back to a time you did something you never thought would be possible, a time when the obstacles seemed too big to overcome? What did it take to bridge over those obstacles?

We’d like you to meet Jen Randall, a 28-year-old resident of Jamestown, ND who overcame her obstacles to achieve what some thought was impossible. In April of 2011 Jen did something she had wanted to do for many years—move out on her own. Her road to independence was filled with a few unsuccessful attempts, just like many of the paths we all take in life. Following those failed attempts, Jen started to give up on the idea and assumed she would forever live with her family. Yet, something inside of her wasn’t comfortable with that future. She was an adult, had a relationship for which she “owed” her privacy, and even more so wanted her independence.

“It is absolutely amazing how far Jen has come…”

Jen was fortunate enough to have a previous working relationship with Andrea Nelson, a local advocate with Freedom in Jamestown. She began sharing her desires to move out on her own to Andrea and the staff with Triumph, Inc. “Jen asked if we could meet together to talk about her desire to move on her own,” Andrea said. Together, we developed a plan for success. Our meetings were held in her office with no distractions and at Jen’s pace. Our focus was on Jen and her desires to move to her own place and increase her independence.

Jen and Andrea meet weekly at the beginning and worked on self-advocacy, empowerment skills, communication, dealing with frustrations, how and where to get help, responsibilities, and relationships. Some weeks the same conversation was repeated until Jen felt comfortable with the ideas and new skills.

What’s

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“Once her confidence was built, we changed our focus to setting rules and what to expect from life on her own,” Andrea said. They discussed rules Jen wanted for her apartment, like when she wanted guests to be over and how she was going to tell them when it’s time to leave. They discussed what she should do and how to handle the situation if guests showed up unwanted. When she felt comfortable enough, she invited her support team together to show them how she had prepared for a more independent life. With the plan that was presented and Jen showing a new level of confidence, everyone was on board. Even her mother, who was reluctant to let her daughter move over concerns of safety that were not an issue at home, supported this transition. Andrea concluded, “A team approach is what made this so successful for Jen. Triumph, Inc. worked with her and their staff on safety and supports while Jen and I worked on the personal side of living independently.”

Jen moved into her new apartment in April of 2011. After she moved in Andrea and Jen continued to meet at her apartment until Jen wasn’t sure why they were meeting anymore. Jen proved her skills by requesting that her staff hours decrease, which was granted. She was also able to save money and get a cat from the local humane society, where she volunteers. She also purchased a computer.

Jennie Barnard with Triumph, Inc. stated, “As a provider we couldn’t be happier. It is absolutely amazing how far Jen has come and has definitely exceeded all expectations we had. We are so fortunate to be a part of Jen making her dreams come true”

Jen’s success proves if you have determination, courage, and a little guidance from someone you trust, you can live independently. With the help of Freedom, Jen learned how to effectively advocate for things she wanted in life. She wants to experience life just like anyone else, on her terms. That is her goal and that is what we, as an organization, hope to help her achieve and maintain.
From Where I Sit

By Nate Aigaard, Executive Director

What makes a great organization? Is it how much money you have, how many employees, or how many people who have heard about you? I don't think so. What makes a great organization is its mission, and the commitment of the people involved in working toward that mission. Freedom has been fortunate enough to be selected one of 12 Seal of Distinction organizations in North Dakota by the Impact Foundation, which means we're great! Of course not. But what it does mean is that we have the potential, and the Foundation is willing to invest in us to help move us up to a higher level of effectiveness.

We have had our current mission statement for quite some time. It states: The mission of Freedom Resource Center is to work toward equality and inclusion for people with disabilities through programs of empowerment, community education, and systems change. Part of what we do is short-term. We work with people with disabilities who have aspirations for greater independence, community involvement, or self-sufficiency. We provide advocacy, skills training, information, and peer support in order to help them accomplish their goals.

Part of what we do is long-term. Through community education and other programs, we want to change attitudes about the value and worth of people with disabilities. We want the world "equality" to really mean equal opportunity to participate fully in the American dream. We also want to change policies, programs, and laws that prohibit people from reaching their potential. This might mean something as big as allowing people to stay on Medicare while they work, so they don't have to fear losing their health insurance. It might be as small as convincing a business that installing appropriate accessible parking is the right thing to do.

I believe we have the right mission. We have great employees, board members, and volunteers. Through our work with the Impact Foundation over the past two years, we have built the framework to make this organization better. As one of the Seal of Distinction organizations, we are required to put certain plans in place. We decided on these main goals: 1) enhance community awareness of the organization; 2) solidify the organization’s long-term financial status; and 3) increase the quality and quantity of Freedom’s services.

Last month we came out with a new format for our newsletter, and introduced you to our fundraising program. We also introduced you to Jennifer Bloom, who has done amazing things. This month we are gearing up for the one-day fundraising blitz, Giving Hearts Day. We have been selected to participate in this program through the Dakota Medical Foundation (DMF) and Impact Foundation. We are excited about this opportunity to further strengthen our organization's future. Every bit helps, so please consider giving to the Impact Foundation website on February 14. If you do not have access to the Internet, please give us a call at 701-450-0499, and we will assist you with your donation.

I want to express my sincere thanks to Pat Traynor, Julie Haugen, Laura Hicks and all the staff at the Impact Foundation and DMF for their assistance and support over the last two years. It is indeed an honor to be working with them, and also a tremendous responsibility to continue to do good work even better.

To Know

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 Wahpeton Office: 315 11th Street North Wahpeton, ND 58075 (701) 672-1648 Cell: (701) 640-7148


Remember us on Giving Hearts Day.
To make a secure online contribution to Freedom Resource Center, simply go to www.impactwebtrack.org on February 14th and click on Giving Hearts Day "Learn More" button. Or call us directly at 800-450-0499. All Donations are tax deductible.

Thank you for your continued support of our mission.

High Impact Seal of Distinction

The Impact Institute presented Freedom Resource Center with its "High Impact Seal of Distinction" for its commitment to superior performance and results.

Valley City Area Employment Committee

Question and Answer with Andrea Nelson

Q. Why did this group come together in Valley City?
A. The same conversation was being held by multiple people needing to inform and improve the employment outlook of people with disabilities. We decided there was a need to organize a group. Picking a date, time, and sending invitations was the hardest part!

Q. What is the purpose of this group?
A. To get people with disabilities, agencies, and others in the community working together, to learn from one another, and improve employment opportunities in the Valley City area.

Q. How often do you meet?
A. We are currently meeting monthly. Right now we are working on getting trainings to Valley City with national speakers to address concerns, perceptions, attitudes, and the understanding of people with disabilities and the laws that are affected. If you would like to know more about our committee or even the meetings please contact me, Andrea Nelson, 701-252-4893 or andread@freedomrc.org.

Some of our current partners are people with disabilities, Job Service North Dakota, Valley City Chamber of Commerce, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Open Door Center, Triumph Inc. Special Education, South Central Transit, and Freedom Resource Center.

Q. What is the most interesting thing you've discovered so far?
A. How much we can learn from one another and use each other’s services.

Right away we established common problems that we all deal with. Now, we are working to make a great impact in the community. It takes open minds and thinking outside the box to make changes, and I think we are heading in that direction.

Q. What is one thing your group wishes the community knew about employment for people with disabilities?

A. People who have the ability to work are still people first. They deserve equal rights, not special, opportunities in our community. Keep your minds and doors open for opportunities. Having a disability does not mean you do not have a developmental disability, nor does it mean people who “use” the system. A reasonable accommodation shouldn’t be taken as, “here we go again, another person asking for a free handout.” We need to show that disability means much more than those things and our community needs to make improvements in those areas.

Education, South Central Transit, and Freedom Resource Center.

Information

In an attempt to reduce the cost of mailings, please send your email address to freedom@freedomrc.org

If you would like to be removed from our mailing list please call 1-800-450-0499.

Freedom Resource Center and/or its Board of Directors do not necessarily endorse or support any of the views expressed within the personal testimonials contained in this newsletter, unless approval is specifically mentioned.

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