

A Friend in Your Community



Carol Rau

Carol Rau turns 60 in a couple of months. She had worked as a nurse since the age of 16, but the work took its toll on her body. Suffering from a bad back, she was no longer able to work and moved to Lisbon in 2011.

Because of her physical condition, Carol decided it was time to apply for Social Security Disability Insurance. "I started working

with Joyce Wolter in the Wahpeton office to help with all of the paperwork." Carol said. "Shortly after I began working with her, we heard Freedom Resource Center was going to open in office right here in Lisbon. I asked that when the office opened that Joyce send my paperwork there."

"We've needed something like Freedom Resource Center in our town for a long time."

Failing to get approved for Social Security, but unable to work, was the cause of stress and hardship for Carol. Seeking help is not always easy, but at times necessary. "It would have been tiresome to have been going through this alone," said Carol. "Nobody wanted to listen to just me. I needed to have someone to help that was knowledgeable. That someone was Pam (Foertsch)."

Pam worked tirelessly to assist Carol in understanding and completing needed paperwork. Whether it was working through forms or making a phone call on Carol's behalf, Pam was ready to

help Carol regain her independence. "Pam was always there for me and always knowledgeable. She's so people friendly. She really is fit for this job." Carol stated.

With her back problems persisting, Carol needed surgery in 2014. After the surgery, Carol and Pam worked to appeal the Social Security decision in hopes to lessen the financial stress she was experiencing. "October 24th, 2014, was the day I got approved for Social Security. I could now stop relying on others," Carol said.

Getting approved for Social Security hasn't stopped Carol from visiting Pam in Freedom Resource Center's Lisbon office. "Sometimes I go there just to visit with her. Pam, I consider a friend." Carol expressed. "I like seeing other people use this free service also. There are always people in her office." She continued. "We've needed something like Freedom Resource Center in our town for a long time." Carol said, citing the number of people with disabilities and signs of aging in the Ransom and Sargent county area.

"I'm always asked from my neighbors, where do you go for help?" Carol Rau said. "I tell every single one of them I go to Pam and Freedom Resource Center." Thanks to people like Carol spreading the word about Freedom Resource Center's free services to people with any type of disability at any age, Freedom's Lisbon office has had a stellar first full year of service. If you or someone you know in Ransom or Sargent county is facing barriers to independence and would like a partner to help overcome those obstacles, call Pam at 701-683-6850.

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A 35 Under 35 Women's Leadership Participant

Tawnya Taylor has been accepted in the United Way of Cass-Clay's 35 Under 35 Women's Leadership program. Taylor currently serves as the Peer Mentoring Specialist at Freedom Resource Center. She began her career at Freedom Resource Center in March of 2014 and has made a big impact in the lives of people with disabilities.

Quickly becoming a spokesperson for our organization in frequent media appearances, this is a way for Tawnya to broaden her impact in the region. "I thought this would be a good opportunity to build on who I am," Taylor said. "I began the process by applying and searching out recommendations. It was really like applying for a new job." She stated.

At the young age of 23, Taylor is the youngest participant in this year's program. The selection process is very competitive with about 120 local women



applying to the program from both Cass and Clay Counties. It is an honor to have a member of our organization be accepted.

The purpose of the program is to mobilize the caring power of women, to energize and inspire women to make a difference,

and to deepen leadership opportunities for young women in the Cass and Clay communities. "Beyond the skills I hope to learn, it is a really good networking opportunity," Tawnya stated.

The 7th annual program begins in January and runs through June of 2015. The participants will meet once a month for a session. Each session involves a theme that will help develop leadership skills.

"I'm very excited to be a part of this, but I'm also a little nervous," Taylor continued. "My overall goal is not only improve upon my skill set for Freedom Resource Center but to also learn and participate in other community opportunities that enhance our area."

Please join us as we congratulate and celebrate Tawnya Taylor's acceptance into the 35 Under 35 Women's Leadership Program!

EYI

Visions Support Group

When: 2nd Wednesday of each month from 12:30-2:30 pm and other activities on alternative dates as needs grow.

Where: Godfathers Pizza, Moorhead Center Mall
Address: 420 Center Ave, Moorhead, MN 56560
Contact: Todd Fahlstrom, Phone: (218) 443-1499
E-mail: Todd.fahlstrom@usfamily.net

Upcoming Freedom In Action Fargo: Homemade Pizza Dough

When: Jan. 29, 2:30 pm
Where: Lower level Cass County Annex

Detroit Lakes: Owl Handwarmers

When: Jan. 30, 1 pm
Where: Freedom office

Lisbon: 8-week Cooking Well class

When: Jan. 29, 1-3 pm
Where: Courthouse meeting room

Wahpeton: Make Your Own Journal

When: Jan. 21, 1:30-3:30 pm
Where: Wahpeton Park Optimists Shelter

Jamestown: 4-part series Grief & Loss; Financial Planning

When: Jan. 24, 2-4 pm
Living Wills; Preplanning Funerals
When: Jan. 31, 2-4 pm
Where: James River Senior Center

What's Wrong With This Picture?



Accessible main aisle.



Crowded side aisle.

Often the term "Accessible Route" brings outdoor scenes to mind, such as getting from the parking spot to the store. Accessible Routes are also needed inside. Many stores have wide access aisles like the one shown on the left. But if a person looks to a side aisle, spaces like the picture on the right are common. During big sales events (like the Christmas Season) stores often pack in more merchandise and the clear spaces get smaller. Even a person walking without a shopping cart has difficulty maneuvering these areas. The minimum width of an Accessible Route should be 36 inches.

From Where I Sit



Nate Aalgaard, Executive Director

If they just did it my way, what would I want our various legislative bodies to do?

Let's take the worst first – the U.S. Congress. If you've been reading my monthly articles over the last couple of years, you will know that my mantra is that we need more employment opportunities for people with disabilities. I will go out on a limb here and say I think we should have universal health care in this country.

I know that's not popular with a lot of people, but as far as the disability community is concerned, it would be a tremendous relief to not have to worry about losing your healthcare benefits when you go back to work after encountering a disability.

Fear of losing health care is one of the major stumbling blocks to increasing the employment rate for people with disabilities. Medicare and Medicaid

services are essential for their survival, and they cannot fathom the thought of possibly losing them because they earn too much money. If everybody had health care and nobody had to worry about losing it, that barrier would go away.

Second, Congress should get serious about creating jobs. We constantly hear about the deteriorating conditions of our roads and bridges. How about major construction projects the fix those, as well as install some more mass transit. It all takes money of course, and maybe the gas tax is going to have to be raised. It wouldn't hurt too much at the moment with gas under two dollars a gallon. A lot of the primary and secondary jobs in the construction industry could be held by people with disabilities.

Third, approve the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. This is a treaty that was negotiated by George W. Bush and his administration, and supported by the Obama administration. It's being held up in the U.S. Senate by a few people who fear that we will lose our sovereignty to other countries, or that it will somehow interfere with people's ability to homeschool their children. That last part I totally don't understand. The United States of America has always been a leader in disability rights. Approving this treaty would make that statement clear to the world. This year is the 25th anniversary of the passage of the ADA. It's time!

In Minnesota, the state continues to work on a plan to comply with the Olmstead

decision. It is still in process, and disability advocates would like to see a more robust and detailed plan on how people with disabilities will be integrated to the maximum extent possible. We are also looking at higher wages for people who provide personal care services in homes.

North Dakota has studied the home and community-based service system for the last two years. One glaring item has come to the top of the list, and that is behavioral health services. The state needs to do more to enhance community-based mental health and substance abuse services. We as disability advocates would also like to see more services provided to people who wish to live at home rather than in an institutional setting.

Minnesota and North Dakota, like most states, still have many counties that are not served by Centers for Independent Living. In Freedom's case, we can provide the full array of our services in only about half of our 19-county catchment area. I would like to see full funding for the Independent Living program around the country. I happen to think it's a valuable service that cannot only help improve the lives of people with disabilities, but provide a valuable resource to communities so that they are more inclusive and welcoming for all.

So there you have it; my short but important list of issues that would enhance the independence and quality of life for people with disabilities. I don't think it's too much to ask.

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

Go to www.freedomrc.org
& click



Giving Hearts Day
impactgiveback.org
February 12, 2015

Opening soon:



Freedom's Moorhead office
1132 28th Ave. S., Suite 105A