

the Independent

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Center for Independent Living, Inc.

July 2013

Taking The Leap

By Tyler Axness, Communication and Policy Coordinator

Taking the leap of faith and asking for help when life throws new obstacles in your path is never easy. Sometimes we let our pride get in the way and we never take that leap, leaving us stuck behind mounting trenches. Yet sometimes the unrelenting urge to improve our lives pushes us to take that leap and things we never thought we'd achieve become reality. David Henager took that leap when he contacted Freedom Resource Center.

"I knew about Independent Living Centers, but I never went to one before. I had just moved to Fargo and I found out about Freedom Resource Center on the internet, David said." He has periodic seizures due to epilepsy. David explained he was struggling to find employment in the area, was not on Social Security, and didn't have insurance. "I decided this time I needed assistance and I knew Freedom could help with my disability, he said."

"A friend told me in high school that in the word disability is the word ABILITY. Everyone who has a disability should remember they have ABILITY to do whatever they want...the person's mind is a powerful thing."

Cindy Gabbert is our Independent Living Advocate who first met with David. Together they began working on independent living and job skills. It was at this time David decided to join the upcoming Living Well with a Disability (LWWD) class offered at Freedom. The ten-week class teaches people with disabilities how to set and reach goals by overcoming life's barriers. Mark Bourdon, Program Director, would be this section's instructor.

While LWWD moved forward week-to-week, David expressed interest in Freedom's Peer Mentor program. Shortly thereafter David and Bobbi Mundt, Peer Mentoring Specialist at the time, began the training process. The Peer Mentor program is a volunteer-driven service where people with similar disabilities work together to overcome barriers. "What is great about David is his determination to become an advocate for people with epilepsy." Bobbi said throughout the training.

Just four days before week two of LWWD, David came in with exciting news along with some questions. "He told me he had a job offer at a local pizza place." Cindy explained with a smile. "He asked me about reasonable accommodations and how to request those, so we recapped the information we had gone over previously. He checked back in a few days later and said things were going just fine." They would continue to work on job skills and time management alongside

LWWD.

Mark's class had wrapped up, which left many participants wanting to learn more. It was at this same time David informed us he would be moving back to California. He was determined to finish the class before he left. On September 24th he received his Certificate of Completion and searched with Bobbi for affordable housing in California.

Now settled in California, David still calls Freedom to catch up. "I'm currently working at a Veterinary Clinic in Elk Grove, CA. I still look at the Working Well and Living Well With a Disability textbooks every chance I can." He told our staff.

"I'm hoping I can go back to school because one day I would like to work with teenagers and young adults with disabilities, so they understand just because they have a disability doesn't mean they are different than someone who doesn't." David explained, "A friend told me in high school that in the word disability is the word ABILITY. Everyone who has a disability should remember they have ABILITY to do whatever they want...the person's mind is a powerful thing."

"The staff at Freedom were great. They welcomed me with a smile every time I came in. I felt I had another family at Freedom." David concluded.

David took the leap and has realized his possibilities are endless. Many staff have indicated they miss seeing his smiling face come through our door. "I have seen David become more confident in the time I have known him," Cindy described, "I use his example for others who come through our doors." We wish David all the best as he continues his path forward.



David Henager

What's

- **What Independent Living Means to Freedom Resource Center**
- **Americans With Disabilities Act Trivia Tidbits**
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- **What's Wrong With This Picture?**
- **Freedom in Action "Planting Seeds" in Wahpeton, ND**

INSIDE

What independent living means to Freedom Resource Center

By Mark Bourdon, Program Director



Mark Bourdon

From the 19th century until about 1960, disability was treated almost exclusively as a medical, rehabilitation, and charity case. The goal was either to “fix” people with disabilities, or to segregate those who couldn’t be “fixed” into institutions. The Independent Living movement began to change that. The Independent Living philosophy is very different from the medical model (fix the person) or the moral model (people with disabilities are a charity case).

While people with disabilities are dependent on “professionals” to make decisions about their lives in the medical model; the Independent Living philosophy considers disability a natural part of life. Independent Living means we have the right to live independently; enjoy self-determination; make choices; contribute to society; pursue meaningful careers; and enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of American society.

The Independent Living philosophy also believes that people with disabilities are the best experts on their needs, and therefore they must take the initiative, individually and collectively, in designing and promoting better solutions; as well as organize themselves in order for political change to occur. Centers for Independent Living were

created to be run by and for people with disabilities, and offer support, advocacy, and information on empowerment in the attainment of independence from a peer viewpoint, a perspective that was previously excluded from participation in the discussion and execution of “services for the disabled.”

Although progress has been made since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, there are still economic, political, social, cultural, and educational barriers that people with disabilities face every day. Because of these barriers, Freedom Resource Center for Independent Living works to advance civil rights protections, remove barriers, and provide strong advocacy efforts to advance systems change so that independence, self-sufficiency, and integration can be attained for those who are living with a disability.

EYI

• Learn about Advance Directives and Living Wills

Freedom In Action
Detroit Lakes and Fergus Falls
Call Tanya at 218-998-1799
for information

• Basics of Photography

Freedom In Action
Wahpeton
Call Joyce at 701-672-1648
for information

• Water coloring

Freedom In Action
Fargo/Moorhead
Call Diane at 701-478-0459
for information

Americans with Disabilities Act Trivia Tidbits

Did you know that there are tax incentives available to encourage compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

All businesses are eligible for an incentive to remove physical, structural and transportation barriers. What is the maximum amount of the Tax incentive?

- A) \$5,000
- B) \$10,000
- C) \$15,000
- D) \$20,000

What questions may a public entity or private business ask to determine if a service animal is a service animal?

- A) What is the nature or extent of an individual’s disability?
- B) Is this animal required because of a disability?
- C) What documentation do you have to prove this is a service animal?
- D) What work or task does this animal perform (unless obvious)?

The employee provisions of the ADA apply to businesses with at least how many employees?

- A) 10
- B) 15
- C) 25
- D) 50
- E) 100

What’s Freedom’s Web page all about?

Go to www.freedomrc.org to see upcoming videos, read our weekly blogs entitled “Motivational Monday”; “What’s Wrong Wednesday?” and “Freedom Friday.” Of course, you can read all about the wonderful services that Freedom Resource Center provides to our community-FREE of Charge.

ANSWERS: 1:C, 2:B&D, 3:B (*State employees.)
laws may cover organizations with fewer

From Where I Sit



Nate Aalgaard

Americans with Disabilities Act: Success or Failure?

without wheelchair access to the front door. That's a minimum expectation these days. But I still see additions to businesses that are not accessible, including one in my own hometown. I see plenty of businesses that don't have the right kind of accessible parking, or signage, or tables that I can use.

A group of us are working to make sure the new Vikings Stadium in Minneapolis is as accessible as possible. There are some design features they are proposing that concern us, including the use of platform lifts to some of the wheelchair seats. Many of us have had nightmare experiences with lifts. They don't work properly, the key is missing, or they are slow and incredibly loud and you feel like everybody is staring at you. The one in the North Dakota Capitol comes to mind here.

Doors are a huge problem for many of us with physical disabilities. The ADA didn't change that. And for the record, the ADA does not require power door openers (unfortunately.) I actually thought I might end up spending the evening in the

restroom at a local concert venue, because the door was so heavy I couldn't even get it open. I ended up latching onto it with my backpack, hooking my elbow around the other strap, and managed to pull the door open far enough to yell out for someone to help me. Angry, frustrated?--You better believe it.

We can find an endless supply of pictures for our "What's Wrong Wednesday" blog and "What's Wrong With This Picture?" section of our newsletter. I tell people that my work as an advocate will never be done.

How about employment? It looks to me like the rate of unemployment for people with disabilities is virtually unchanged since the start of the ADA. One study indicated that during the recent recession, people with disabilities were laid off at twice the rate of people without disabilities. What's wrong with that picture? I thought the ADA was supposed to cure all that.

When I think back to 36 years ago when I started out my journey as a person with a disability, I will have to admit there's been a lot of progress, especially in the way buildings are constructed. But far too often I see basic accessibility issues ignored. I see people not taking the time to make sure that their communication is accessible to everyone, and I know that there are a lot of barriers to employment that don't need to exist.

Maybe I'm just in a negative spot at the moment. But I bet you would be too if you almost had miss a concert because you were trapped in a restroom.

July 26 is the 23rd anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA.) Most provisions came into effect two years later. As I reflect on this period of time and the promises that I heard President Bush give us as he signed this bill, I wonder if anything has significantly changed. He talked about the shameful walls of discrimination tumbling down. He talked about equal access to public services, businesses, and employment.

Sure, new buildings are usually not built



Standing: Rev. Harold Wilke, Sandy Parrino.

Seated (L to R): Evan Kelp, President

George H. W. Bush, Justin Dart

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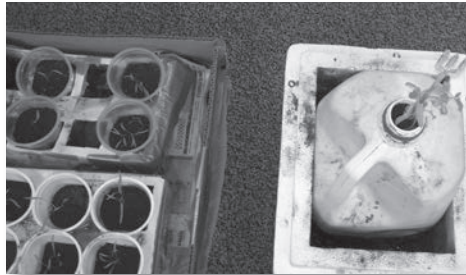
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*“Equal Choice,
Equal Responsibility”*

Go to www.freedomrc.org
& click



Freedom in Action, “Planting Seeds” in Wahpeton, ND



Picture #1: ClarEd Knoell volunteer at Freedom Resource Center teaches participants, Winnie Gutzmer, Jennifer Blom and others how they can grow vegetables in recycled containers instead of purchased containers to help save money and our environment.

Picture #2: Tomato plant shown in a milk jug ready to replant in a 5 gallon pickle bucket as of this writing it is producing tomatoes and will be ripe within a few days.

What’s Wrong With This Picture?



Businesses may ask if an animal is a service animal or ask what tasks the animal has been trained to perform, but cannot require special ID cards for the animal or ask about the person’s disability.