Growing Through Creating

As individuals we have unique ways of expressing ourselves, our abilities, and building confidence to become closer to the person we want to be. For some of us it takes a brief compliment from someone whom you respect. Some are content with where they are and choose not to experience new things. Others seek out new adventures and try something daring or undertake a new hobby. For Cathy Ragan that confidence grew with every stitch of a scarf.

Every Thursday from 3:00 to 5:00 you can find volunteers in our Fargo office who gather to stitch items with yarn and talk about life for a while. Cathy is a regular attendee, who since joining the group has stitched over 40 scarfs and 10 hats for friends and family. Each week staff at our office are greeted with a smile, candy Ragan has brought in to share, and an update on her stitching progress. Most importantly, each week staff has noticed and commented on her new approach to life.

"Look at what Freedom helped me learn." – Cathy Ragan

"Whether it is her family tree recreated in a picture book or a new scarf she completed over the past week, it is always good to see Cathy's new creations," Tyler Axness, Communication and Policy Coordinator commented. Often filled with laughter, the group brightens up the hallways in Freedom's Fargo office. "I've seen the growth and the progress in Cathy's ability to communicate more effectively by coming to our office weekly and sharing two hours with friends. Most of all, I've enjoyed the humor she's now more willing to express," said Axness.

"My observations are that she has grown in her level of confidence, as we are also working on more effective communication skills. Cathy is also using public transportation more on her own to get about town independently, though her wonderful Uncle Bill is there for her when she needs his support," said Cindy.

"I can see that Cathy is using the things and services Freedom Resource Center has to offer to make her own life better. She certainly has proven that getting people more involved with arts and different hobbies brings out the positive, creative, and fun side of people," said Diane.

Cathy continues to show that we all grow when we try something new. Some of that growth comes unexpectedly and indirectly. The power of camaraderie in small groups focused on creating and conversing has unleashed a confident, effective communicator in Ragan. As she continues to attend the stitching group our staff will take pleasure in watching her continued growth.

If you or someone you know is interested in attending the Thursday stitching group in Fargo, call 701-478-0459 for more details.

What's

- Anniversary of Disabilities Act
- From Where I Sit
- Call for Exhibitors
- What's Wrong With This Picture?
From Where I Sit

disability rights in his time at the US Senate; as one of the sponsors of the Americans with Disabilities Act; and later the 2008 ADA Amendments Act, which re-established Congressional intent and reversed several negative decisions of the Supreme Court.

This is the final year in Congress for Harkin, who is approaching his 75th birthday this November. After graduating from Iowa State University and serving as a fighter pilot in the US Navy from 1962-67, Harkin first went to Washington as a staff member of Rep. Neal Smith. In 1972 he and his wife, Ruth, both graduated from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. They returned to Iowa where Tom worked for Polk County Legal Aid and Ruth won election as Story County Attorney.

Harkin ran for Congress in 1974 in Iowa's 5th district and won. He served 10 years in the House of Representatives before winning a seat in the US Senate. In 2008 he won election for a historic 5th time.

As a young Senator, Harkin was asked by Sen. Ted Kennedy to craft a comprehensive civil rights act for people with disabilities. His lead staff person on this project, Bobby Silverstein, was in Fargo a few years ago and told fascinating accounts of the work it took to get that legislation passed against many obstacles. Early on, it was pretty much Kennedy and Harkin in the Senate. The business community was particularly skeptical of this new law that they felt could be too costly and burdensome. But they succeeded in passing the ADA, the world's first such legislation. It was signed into law on July 26, 1990 by President George H.W. Bush at a White House ceremony attended by over 3,000 disability rights activists, including me.

Harkin has also been instrumental on health care issues, many of which are of vital importance to people with disabilities. He has fought for and secured funding for research into such conditions as Parkinson's disease, spinal cord injury and juvenile diabetes. After

the death of Sen. Kennedy in 2009 Harkin became Chair of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. He was instrumental in crafting the prevention and wellness section of healthcare reform legislation. He continues to push for government mandates to provide more and better Home and Community Based Services through Medicaid, and for increased access to competitive employment.

In Praise of Sen. Tom Harkin

If the disability community had a rock star, it would be Senator Tom Harkin. Harkin (D) Iowa, has been a champion of

"How to Succeed in Business without really Trying" A Trollwood production
Free tickets available for the July 16-19, July 23-26 and July 30-August 2 showings.
General admission tickets and can be used for any of those dates.
Contact Tawnya at 701-478-0459 for ticket information

Meditation Training
Learn from an expert about different techniques to help relax and focus
Where: Optimist Shelter at Chahinkapa Park, Wapeton
When: Thursday, July 24
Time: 1:30 - 3:30
Call Joyce at 701-872-1648 to reserve your spot

Fair Housing and Service Animal Discussion
Mark Bourdon discusses what the law is and what is expected of landlords and tenants
Where: Cashwise 1401 S. 33rd St. Fargo
When: Thursday, July 31
Time: 1:30 - 3:30
Call Cindy to register by July 28th at 701-478-0459

How to Provide Excellent Customer Service to People with Disabilities
Summer Lunch Series
Where: Freedom's office at 701 Main St. Lisbon
When: July 31
Time: 11:30 - 12:30
Call Pam at 701-683-6850 for information

Knitting Club
Show your skills, learn new designs, interact and have fun
Where: Freedom's office at 2701 9th Ave. S. Fargo
When: Every Thursday
Time: 3:00-5:00
Call Tawnya at 701-478-0459 with questions
Marking the 24th Anniversary of the Passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act

July 26th marks the 24th year since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Perhaps the signature piece of legislation, the ADA is geared toward universal and equal access for people with disabilities. Though we’ve made great strides in those 24 years there have also been setbacks. Unfortunately since its passage in 1990, United States Supreme Court decisions have gone against the original intent of the ADA. Other setbacks come from the lack of public understanding and education of ADA requirements in our communities. These setbacks and additional barriers mean there is a lot of work left to be done.

Updated accessibility standards and designs under the ADA were signed into law and went into effect in 2010 after the passage of the 2008 ADA Amendments Act. The new standards were crafted to ensure equal access to public areas for people with disabilities. In an effort to assist this transition, Freedom Resource Center under the direction of Executive Director Nate Aalgaard, formed the Civil and Human Rights Task Force. The mission of the task force is to survey and partner with area businesses, public entities, and local services to eliminate barriers for people with disabilities.

This year Freedom Resource Center put the spirit of the ADA into action by undertaking an accessibility survey in partnership with Hector International Airport in Fargo. The goal was to look at the structural design and accessibility of utilities and services within the airport. Once the physical survey of the airport is complete, volunteers and accessibility experts at Freedom will submit to Hector staff recommendations to remove barriers and increase universal access.

On July 7th, members of Freedom’s Civil and Human Rights Task Force journeyed through the airport with tape measures and clipboards in hand. Followed by local news outlets, the Task Force began to highlight areas in need of improvement. Tawnya Taylor, Peer Mentoring Specialist, was one of our staff on hand. Taylor shared her concerns about the height of service counters with Hector staff. “I could be standing at a high countertop for 15 minutes and they might have no idea I’m there,” said Taylor. Staff at Hector took note of Tawnya.

“The car rental service counters are a bit high and there is a couple of issues with coat hooks and paper towel dispensers being high. Generally though, we didn’t find anything major and it is all pretty easy to fix,” Nate Aalgaard commented. After approximately 2 hours of going from service areas to restrooms and to the gift shop, the survey at Hector International Airport came back with only minor suggestions.

“We appreciate Hector International Airport for reaching out to us for the purpose of making sure their building is accessible for everyone as required under the ADA,” said Aalgaard. “Though we’ve made great progress since the passage of the ADA 24 years ago, there is still much progress to be done. Activities and partnerships like the survey at Hector International Airport is a giant step in the right direction.”

Freedom Resource Center’s Civil and Human Rights Task Force will continue to survey area businesses and services. We’d love to have the opportunity to assess your facility and provide feedback to ensure your building is accessible and open for business for people with disabilities. If you are interested in seeing how your building measures up to the ADA contact Nate at 701-478-0459.

Disclaimer

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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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Call for Exhibitors

We are seeking exhibitors for the 2014 Art of Freedom event to be held on October 23rd at the DMF 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.

Q: If a parking space is marked with a "van accessible" sign (which this one isn't), is it legal for any vehicle with an accessible parking permit (this bus does not have an accessible parking permit) to park in that space, even if it's not a van?

A: Yes, drivers with either an accessible parking placard or plate may park in any stall designated with an accessible parking sign. In Minnesota, violators are subject to a fine of up to $200. In North Dakota the fee is $100. See more at: http://freedom.areavoices.com/page/3/#sthash.dSFT5P3s.dpuf