

# the Independent

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

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## Overcoming The Unexpected Together

CeCe Manock was a long time supervisor in the craft department in a big box retail store in Wahpeton. Consistently receiving outstanding performance reviews, she enjoyed her work. That all changed the day 70 pounds fell off a shelf, striking CeCe in the head, causing a traumatic brain injury.

The physical impact of this traumatic event has carried with it a long-term change of course. Determined to continue to work to pay her bills but unable to perform the required tasks of her supervisor position, CeCe stepped down and took a two-dollar-per-hour pay deduction. After a strong effort in her new role, CeCe determined she couldn't do it anymore because of her recurring symptoms, including loss of memory and blurry vision. A year after the accident, CeCe suffered a stroke.

***“Joyce took me in, calmed me down, and helped me through the process”***

Unsure where to turn, CeCe was referred to Joyce and Freedom Resource Center. “She’ll (Joyce) take care of you,” CeCe said. The first meeting was to discuss Social Security Disability benefits. “Joyce took me in, calmed me down, and helped me through the process,” CeCe continued. “I don’t know what I’d do without her help.”

Though her family has helped out tremendously, CeCe needed the steady and guaranteed income from Social

Security Disability. She said Freedom helped her overcome some of the challenges in applying and working through the system. However, the income from Social Security Disability was a dramatic decrease in what CeCe’s take home pay was from her supervisor position.



CeCe Manock

Since her injury occurred on the job, CeCe and Joyce worked for her deserved benefits from Workforce Safety and Insurance (WSI), a state agency in North Dakota. “There was no guidance from my employer or from WSI on what I should do. Joyce and Freedom Resource Center were the only ones standing by my side.” She told us.

WSI has assisted CeCe in paying for her medical appointments and her medicine. The issue of wages still remained. Due to her injury she took a lower level job and was forced to take a pay cut. Neither WSI nor her employer informed CeCe that the agency would cover the gap in wages as a result of her work-related injury. This has caused great anxiety and frustration for CeCe and her family.

Today CeCe, along with Freedom Resource Center, are working to resolve this unfortunate situation forced upon her as an injured worker. The challenge ahead is due to the time between when the injury occurred and when CeCe became informed that her pay loss should have been covered in injured workers benefits.

We are dedicated to partnering with CeCe to ensure her independence is not limited due to a lack of information. “I don’t know what I’d do without Freedom Resource Center.” CeCe said as our conversation came to a close. This dramatic change of events for CeCe was unexpected and unprepared for. It could happen to anyone at any time. Here at Freedom Resource Center, we’ll be there for you if it does.

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# INSIDE

# From Where I Sit

By Nate Aalgaard,  
Executive Director

So how did the election turn out for you? Like most people, you are probably most relieved that the commercials are over. Thinking back, did you hear anybody addressing specific disability issues in their advertising? Are we, as people with disabilities, a voting block to be reckoned with? I don't think so.

I suppose you could consider all the ads about Medicare to be targeted toward people with disabilities. A lot of us utilize that program, as well as Medicaid, to cover our healthcare needs. The problem is, who do you believe? With all this talk about one candidate cutting Medicare, another privatizing it, another wanting to strengthen and preserve it—Who knows?

A few things I didn't hear about during the election campaign were the things that rise to the top of the list for the people with disabilities we survey in our communities. Those issues are employment, transportation, and negative attitudes and stereotypes. Other issues such as housing and healthcare are also common. People with disabilities have different priority issues than the ones the candidates were talking about. Sure, we heard a

lot about how everybody wants to create jobs and has a great plan for it. What about people with disabilities? Does anybody care to tackle that problem? We, as a group, have far higher unemployment rates than the general public. I've heard anywhere from 40 to over 70 percent.

What about transportation? People with disabilities report problems with transportation as a critical issue almost every time we take a survey. In some communities, public transportation is nonexistent. In others, you can only go certain places at certain times of day or certain days of the week. Getting between cities, even major ones like Fargo and Bismarck, can be a major undertaking. I know the guy a few years ago who took more than one entire day to get from Dickinson to Minot. Another person found it virtually impossible to use public transportation to get from Fergus Falls to Minneapolis. If you don't drive your own car, you're out of luck.

One of the most pervasive problems we encounter is negative attitudes and stigma. People with disabilities can sense being disrespected when they go to access a business or government service. They feel that because of the disability they are living with, people treat them as second-class citizens. Are any politicians talking about increasing the dignity and worth of everyone, including people

with disabilities? Are all the big money donors funding political ads really concerned about us? It seems to me they are only concerned about winning an election and securing their pet projects or tax breaks.

These are real problems that greatly affect the ability of people with disabilities to be independent, yet the politicians are not talking about them. Maybe it's because we don't contribute enough to political campaigns. That goes back to the problem of unemployment and having a lack of resources. Maybe it's because we don't get out and vote. Maybe that's a factor of lack of transportation, lack of information because you don't have a computer, or apathy because you don't think anything is going to change no matter what you do.

I will be watching for the first candidate who comes out in support of disability issues and makes it a point to court the disability vote. Until then, it is our job to keep educating all of our elected officials on the issues that we think are most important to us.



Nate Aalgaard

## To Know

**You're invited to join us for a Thanksgiving Potluck in Detroit Lakes and Fargo! Join us and bring a dish to share.**

### Detroit Lakes

What: Thanksgiving Potluck

When: November 20th

Time: 11:00 to 1:00

Where: Washington Square Mall

### Fargo

What: Grateful Gathering

When: November 27th

Time: 11:00 to 12:30

Where: 2701 9th Ave. S. Suite H

## New Hire

### LaDonna Korstad, Independent Living Advocate

Freedom Resource Center is happy to introduce LaDonna Korstad as our new Independent Living Advocate for Clay County. Korstad brings a vast amount of experience in helping people with disabilities reach independence.

Born in Edina, Korstad's family moved to a small town in western North Dakota, Stanley, where she grew up. "The only paved street in town was Main," Korstad said. "I attended grade school in a two-room school house with grades one through three on one side and grades four through six in the other."

Korstad moved to the Fargo-Moorhead area to earn her degree. "I attended both Minnesota State University Moorhead and North Dakota State University, she said." LaDonna earned her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and her Master of Liberal Arts from MSUM. She earned her Master of Education from NDSU.

Alongside her education, Korstad has almost 15 years of human service experience. "I have done everything from direct service to job development," LaDonna explained. Past employers include CCRI, North West Mental Health Center, Productive Alternatives, and Heartland Industries.

When asked about her new role and hopes at Freedom LaDonna told us, "My goal is to empower people by giving them the resources to speak up when they feel they have been wronged by others or by a societal system."

LaDonna lives in Moorhead with her husband, Marc, and two cats. Join us in welcoming LaDonna Korstad.



LaDonna Korstad

## Q & A With Mac Schneider

Below are questions Freedom Resource Center asked attorney Mac Schneider about his perception of Workforce Safety and Insurance. This in no way is intended as legal advice, nor should you take it as such.

### 1) What are the common issues you see when it comes to work related injuries?

In many instances, a key dispute is whether an injury is work related (and therefore compensable) or caused by factors unrelated to work. For example, an individual with degenerative disc disease picks up a cinder block on a construction site and herniates a disc in his lower back. The claim will turn, in part, on whether the work-related injury substantially

worsened or accelerated the pre-existing degenerative disc disease (in which case the injury is compensable) or merely acted as a trigger to produce symptoms in the worker's underlying back condition (not compensable).

### 2) What are your perceived gaps in this program?

Respectfully, there are many gaps: An often confusing claims system within which injured workers do not have an advocate, WSI's reliance on paid "independent" medical examiners to refute the findings of injured workers' own treating doctors, and an inability by injured workers to effectively

dispute denied claims at the hearing level without incurring substantial legal fees are just a few.

### 3) What can injured workers do to better their chances of receiving their benefits?

In any disputed claim, medical evidence is key. Injured workers should work closely with their treating doctor to carefully document the work-related nature of any injury. Also, close attention should be paid to all correspondence sent by WSI, as there are strict deadlines which must be met when claims are denied or benefits are reduced.

## The Wahpeton Mayors Committee ADA Seminar

The Wahpeton Mayor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities sponsored an ADA training on October 16. Topics covered were the basics of Title I (employment), the new 2010 accessibility standards, and accessible parking. The presenters were Nate Aalgaard, Executive Director of Freedom Resource Center; and Cory Birkholz, ADA/Accessibility Specialist at Options Interstate Resource Center for Independent Living in East Grand Forks. This training will be repeated in Jamestown on November 15, starting at 10:00 a.m. For more information call Andrea at the Jamestown Freedom office: 701-252-4693.



Nate & Joyce at the ADA is YOUR Business

## Information

*In an attempt to reduce the cost of mailings, please send your email address to [freedom@freedomrc.org](mailto:freedom@freedomrc.org)*

*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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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

*“Helping Bridge Your  
Path to Independence”*

## Learn the Art of Self-Defense

Join Master Eric Greenquist from the Greenquist Academy along with Freedom Resource Center in Wahpeton to learn the basics of self-defense and martial arts.

- What: Freedom in Action
- When: November 20th
- Time: 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Where: Greenquist Academy,  
502 MN Ave., Breckenridge, MN

This event is FREE. Register with Joyce by calling 701-672-1648.

## 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.

(US Dept. of Justice/Civil Rights Division)