

THE

Independent

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

DECEMBER 2017

FYI

Jamestown

Basic Photography – Cell phone cameras & basic cameras

Thursday, January 18, 2018

1:00 pm – 3:00pm

James River Community Center

Call Beth to register

at 701-252-4693 (free)

Wahpeton

Cooking Class

Richland County NDSU

Extension Service

Date to be determined in January

For information & registration call

Joyce at 701-672-1648 (free)

Fargo

National Pie Day

Tuesday, January 23, 2018

1:15 – 3:15pm

Freedom Resource Center

2701 9th Avenue South

Contact Abbey or Diane at

701-478-0459 to register (free)

Fargo

**Giving Hearts Day Prep
with Nacho bar**

Thursday, February 1, 2018

11:00am – 2:00pm

Freedom Resource Center

2701 9th Avenue South

Contact Abbey or Diane by January 29

at 701-478-0459 to register (free)

Changes by Nate Aalgaard

Change is in the air, and I'm not just talking about the weather. Both internal and external factors are impacting Freedom and the Independent Living movement.

First, the government. The tax overhaul going through Congress is generating concern for many in the disability community. It gets kind of complicated, but basically, it could trigger cuts in domestic spending because of increasing deficits. That means things like housing assistance, Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living could have less funding. These are programs that people with disabilities need to become or stay independent.

There is also the idea of combining three different programs, including Independent Living State Grants, into one program, with \$57 million less funding. I wrote about it in August. The budget forecast for Minnesota is for a deficit, and North Dakota just went through a challenging budget

process earlier this year.

Closer to home, there have been a number of changes here at Freedom. Hopefully these will be viewed much more positively. It all started with Mark Bourdon, our Program Director, announcing his intention to retire next summer. Cindy Gabbert is currently our Assistant Director, and is training to take over. This opened up her job in Fargo, which was taken by Abbey Krogstad. Abbey's job was taken over by Tanya Stoll, an Advocate in our Fergus Falls office. Leigh Lake was hired to replace Tanya. Jana Lefor is switching from Nursing Facility Relocation Coordinator to Benefits Coach, a new position in our Minnesota Counties. Most people won't know everyone involved here, but I hope the game of musical chairs is over for a while. I am confident everyone who has their new job will enjoy it and do great work to help us further our mission.

The Money Follows the Person program in North Dakota was given another year by the Centers for Medicare

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and Medicaid. What that means is we can continue to have dedicated staff helping people move out of nursing facilities and other institutional settings and into the community. The difficulty has been finding people interested in temporary employment. Most people want and need job security, which is understandable. So instead of trying to hire someone specifically for that position, we have trained our Independent Living Advocates to do this as part of their regular job. We will still be helping people move into the community, just not in exactly the same way. This is now a core service within the Independent Living regulations, so we were charged with doing it anyway.

A couple of former colleagues, Larry Chial and Chuck Stebbins, recently passed away. As I was looking back in some old photographs, I was amazed by how much this place has changed since I got here. Someone asked me the other day if anyone was left from when I started. No, I'm it. There's been a lot of growth, and a lot of new people.

What does this mean? To me it means we have to constantly tell the story of what we do and why we are here. People need to understand that Independent Living is so much more than just helping people. It is people with disabilities having the freedom to choose how they live. It's having the right to make acceptable choices about employment, community involvement, education, and housing. It's about equal opportunity. Sometimes it takes a while for people to catch on, but philosophy is essential to what we do. The other part is to tell policymakers how important this is, so in the long run it thrives rather than withers away due to budget cuts.

From Where I Sit

Help Wanted: Disability Rights Leaders

Lately, it is become apparent to me that I am one of the old timers. Last week, I got a call from John Schneider, one of the members of the board who was instrumental in hiring me and welcoming me to Freedom. I also had lunch with Amanda Ghauri, who was the program director here when I started. None of the board or staff from almost 22 years ago are still actively involved with the organization.



I've also experienced the loss of friends and colleagues who I consider disability advocates. One of those advocates and friends was Larry Chial. He passed away August 25. He was a member of the Board of Directors from 2005 to 2011, being president four of those years. After that, he and I became good friends and spent a lot of time together watching football, movies or documentaries; or talking about current issues. He, his wife Cathi, and I spent many a pleasant evening dining out or having a good meal at their house.

I remember when Larry first got involved with Freedom. He had recently retired from his job doing the accounting for ShareHouse. He told me of his determination to make a difference and not just sit around and do nothing. He told me many times how he had been out and not seen anybody else with a visible disability. He thought it odd that he was the only one. I speculated several reasons



Nate Aalgaard,
Executive Director

for that, including transportation or accessibility barriers, lack of resources, or people simply choosing to stay home rather than be involved in the community. He thought that was terrible, and so do I.

I was pleased and honored his family chose Freedom to be one of the designated organizations for memorials. I know he was involved in many other organizations. I want to make sure that we honor him and acknowledge this gift, as well as his contributions to our organization and the community as a whole. Larry, despite his failing health and increased difficulty getting out, still did what he could. He was a mentor for people here at Freedom. He was a member of the civil and human rights task force, working to make the community more accessible.

Beginning with the funds contributed for the memorials, we will initiate a leadership program in Larry's name. On Giving Hearts Day, February 8, people will be able to designate their donation specifically for that purpose. We are going to use it to train future leaders in the disability rights movement so that we can keep up the good work into the future.



Introducing:



Leigh Lake

We'd like to take this opportunity to introduce Leigh Lake, the new Independent Living Advocate with Freedom Resource Center's Fergus Falls office. Prior to Freedom Resource Center, Leigh has worked at Someplace Safe and Lutheran Social Services in Fergus Falls. When Leigh is not working, she

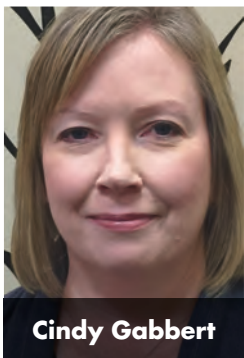
loves to spend time at home with her photography and family; especially her five grandchildren. Leigh also has been developing a compulsion with her flower and vegetable gardens, which have taken on more space in recent years. She continues to be amazed with how you plant one seed and you receive a beautiful and bountiful harvest! Kind of like our work here at Freedom Resource. We help consumers plant their own seeds and each person grows, regardless of the goals that they set for themselves, or the barriers that may exist within themselves or their community. Leigh is very excited and honored to be part of Freedom Resource Center and looks forward to this new chapter in her career and life.



Abbey Krogstad

Abbey joined Freedom Resource Center in 2016 as an Integrated Employment Specialist. She recently has moved to Independent Living Advocate in the Fargo office. Abbey will assist consumers with setting educational, vocational and general independent living goals, develop strategies, and make progress on

goals they have chosen; as well as provide independent living skills training with individuals and groups.

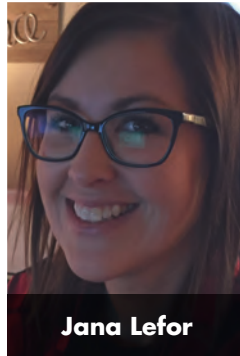


Cindy Gabbert

Cindy joined Freedom Resource Center in 2010 as the Independent Living Advocate in the Fargo office. She has moved to the Assistant Program Director this past August and will become the Program Director on June 6, 2018.

Cindy will be responsible for direct service personnel, quality assurance, program development, direct service, and assisting the Executive Director carry out the day-to-day operations of Freedom Resource Center.

Jana Lefor



Jana joined Freedom Resource Center in 2015 as a Nursing Facility Transition Coordinator in our Fargo office. After extensive training, Jana has moved into a Benefits Coach position serving our Minnesota service area. Jana will be providing benefits and financial planning to Social Security recipients who would like to consider transitioning

off of Social Security benefits and securing competitive employment. This is a new exciting collaboration between Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Freedom Resource Center.



Tanya Stoll

Tanya joined Freedom Resource Center in 2009 as the Independent Living Advocate in the Fergus Falls office. She has moved into the Integrated Employment Specialist for our Minnesota service area. Tanya will coordinate and conduct Informed Choice discussions and information sessions with subminimum wage

earners and their parents or guardians. Tanya will also continue to provide Assistive Technology services through our Fergus Falls office.

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

Go to www.freedomrc.org
& click



Save The Date



Giving Hearts
← FEB Day 8TH →
givingheartsday.org

What's Wrong With This Picture?

Here we see a couple obvious 'What Is Wrong' and one that we need to measure. The slots in the grate should run the other direction. A wheelchair could easily get trapped when the slots are parallel to the direction of travel. On the opposite side of the grate there appears to be a vertical change greater than 1/4 inch. The slope of the yellow area may be too steep, this would have to be measured.

