Tuesday, September 17th marked a special day for Freedom Resource Center, Celebrating 30 years of Freedom. The event went very well, and validates the hard work put in by the dedicated people who started this organization. They set the foundation for making a difference in the lives of people with disabilities. By working together with community partners to break down barriers, we look forward to the next 30 years. Battles are seldom won without key contributions from community members and area leaders. Again, the last 30 years would not have been possible if it were not for the support and resources from the communities in which we serve.

Parking in this fashion provides room for ramps and mobility devices. In the 2018-2019 Session changes were made to clean up language and help make parking in an accessible spot without a placard an enforceable offense.

Improving accessibility in our communities is just one example of how advocates, community businesses and leaders can come together and improve people’s access to the community in which they live. Living with a disability has a way of putting you at odds with your surroundings. Whether it is an accessibility issue, or just coming to terms with a recent diagnosis, having peer support can make all the difference. We are blessed to work with so many wonderful people, who despite facing challenges of their own, make the time to help others overcome barriers to independence. Richard Ovind is one of those people. Richard has spina bifida, works full-time and still makes time to give back to his community. He is a member of several committees in the city of Jamestown, and volunteers for Freedom whenever he can as a peer mentor and advocate for accessible

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Tenacity Versus All Adversity: Homage to a Trailblazer of the Northern Prairies

Written by Alex Cyusa, Freedom Resource Center Board Member

In the spring 2015, I was introduced to Nate Aalgaard and Freedom Resource Center (FRC) as a Communication intern. I came in with no specific expectations as of the quality of internship FRC would offer me. Little did I know this would change my professional life because of the noble work FRC does. FRC’s mission completely impacted my perspective on society and equal access to resources for all its members. My social perspective was expanded towards a segment of the population that is often left behind or left completely dependent to family members or social services. This is how I embarked on a journey alongside the FRC family lead by the fearless Executive Director: Nate Aalgaard.

It is hard to separate FRC from Nate because his personal journey is filled with obstacles that could have left him down, but his tenacious upper Midwestern Norwegian heritage, would not allow him to accept any hardship situations as an ultimate road block. In this piece, the FRC family would like to take the time to give praise to the gentleman of many hats such as: family member, community leader, proud UND Alumnus, Moorhead resident, Executive Director, Mentor, colleague, ADA Advocate, and many more hats Nate humbly wears...despite his militant modesty. We wanted to honor his advocacy of many decades fighting for the disenfranchised American people with disabilities. In order to be eco-friendly, and not use too much paper, let us look at four of many roles that Nate has mastered over the years:

1. The Community Leader: always showing up for others in place where you would expect him the least, forming partnerships with community stakeholders, building bridges to move forward as one community, and holding other community leaders accountable.

2. The Activist: always making sure people with disabilities are aware of their rights according to the Americans with Disabilities Act hence giving a voice for those disfranchise by society.

3. The Mentor: always making sure those around him are exposed to learning opportunities where they can professionally grow and become a better version of themselves by tapping into one’s full potential.

4. The Artist: always attentive to the picturesque sceneries of the beautifully divine northern prairies and immortalizing these precious moments on canvas with his magical brush stroke.

Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. once said: “If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.”

Nate Aalgaard’s life journey is one of a man that never stops moving forward despite all odds and this is a great reminder to the world that an uncontrollable life event does not define you as a person: focus on what you can control which are your mindset and attitude towards life.

Nate Aalgaard was recognized for his service and leadership as the recipient of the Executive Director of the Year award on September 17, 2019.

parking. Richard is helping others so that they too can be empowered and overcome barriers. Richard joins a dedicated group of Peer-Mentors who walk beside those who need support. Without their hard-work and compassion for helping others, we could not do what we have been able to do for the last 30 years.

Ensuring that people have access to benefits and programs not only enrich the lives of those being served but strengthen our communities and empower those within it.

Having the choice to live independently without barriers is something that we are very passionate about. If you were able to join us in Celebrating 30 Years of Freedom, you may have noticed the ramp that was set up near the stage. This is a temporary ramp with lasting results. Our ramp program helps to break down barriers and is built on community partnerships. Relationships with Roll-A-Ramp and Aging in Comfort allow our ramp program to accommodate people’s accessibility needs while removing barriers around them. Not only do we look forward to putting up more ramps in the future, we hope to continue building bridges within our communities and crossing them together.
More Award Winners

Lifetime Achievement Award Winner Keith Bjornson accepted by wife Sherry Bjornson
Youth Advocate of the Year Award Winner Addie Loerzel
Distinguished Service Award winner Shaun Crowell with Freedom’s Dan Holte

Peer Mentor of the Year winner Richard Ovind with Freedom’s Paula Short
Employer of the Year winner Josh Teigen with Freedom’s Tom Thompson
Advocate of the Year winner Vickie Jo Sings with Freedom’s Marie Fouquette

Larry Chial Memorial Leadership Award winner Del Rae Williams
Volunteer of the Year winner Glorias Shepherd

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What’s Wrong With This Picture?

A person coming down the sidewalk toward the street will encounter a cross slope much greater than 2% allowed. Cross slope is especially challenging to people using mobility devices such as crutches, walkers, wheelchairs and scooters.