

THE Independent

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

JANUARY 2024

Nurturing Independence Through Peer Mentorship

As we reflect on the incredible impact Freedom Resource Center (FRC) has had on individuals with disabilities, thanks in part to the dedicated individuals who make up our community. One such person is Glorias, a cherished member of our Peer Mentor

program, whose journey with FRC began even before our doors officially opened in Fergus Falls. When asked about her ongoing support for Freedom, Glorias shared, "FRC is such a fun place, and I always feel so welcome & supported here. They help so many people with disabilities in various aspects of life, from housing and employment to budgeting and decluttering."

But what exactly is a Peer Mentor? A Peer Mentor is a person with a disability who volunteers to assist others in achieving specific goals they set for themselves. This unique support system is built on the belief that individuals with disabilities, living independently, working, or actively participating in their community, are the best resources to help others on a similar journey. Peer Mentors like Glorias bring unparalleled insight and personal experiences to the table, serving as invaluable guides through difficult periods, new challenges, and current issues or problems.

Glorias exemplifies the qualities of a good mentor — a desire to help others, mentoring skills rooted in coaching and teaching, positive experiences with mentors in her life, and a spotless reputation. She explained, "Many years ago, I went to school and learned that I could help people as I am such a good listener." As a Peer Mentor, Glorias not only lends a listening ear but also offers support, guidance, and assistance to those working toward their goals.



Volunteering as a Peer Mentor isn't just about giving; it's a reciprocal exchange of knowledge and experience. Glorias emphasized the joy of realizing that the role isn't just about helping others but also about personal growth. "Because it goes back and forth," she explained. "You think your role is to help them, but then you realize all the new things you've done and learned. It is fun!"

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FYI

ALL OFFICES CLOSED

Monday, February 19, in observance of Presidents' Day

2 Job Openings:

Fargo, ND

Full-Time with Benefits - Independent Living Advocate/Transition Coordinator
Wahpeton, ND

Full-Time with Benefits - Independent Living Advocate/Transition Coordinator

For more information, go to:
<https://freedomrc.org/opportunities>

Save the Date

Giving Hearts Day

Thursday, February 8, 2024

Annual Spring Appreciation Luncheon

Thursday, May 16, 2024

Independent Living Skills Class:

Decluttering Your Life from the Inside Out

Tuesdays, Feb. 20 - Mar. 26

10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Jamestown Office - 300 2nd Ave. NE Suite 207

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FYI

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Freedom In Action

FARGO

End of Life Planning Presentation

Tuesday, Feb. 13 - 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM

Fargo office - 2701 9th Ave. S.

RSVP by Tuesday, Feb. 6

Contact Katelyn V. or Sarah - 701.478.0459

St. Patrick's Day Bingo & Prizes

Tuesday, Mar. 12 - 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM

Fargo office - 2701 9th Ave. S.

RSVP by Tuesday, Mar. 5

Contact Katelyn V. or Sarah - 701.478.0459

FERGUS FALLS

Jeanne Grenvik from

Riverwalk Counseling - Person Goals

Friday, Feb. 23 - 1:00 PM - 2:15 PM

RSVP by Tuesday, Feb. 20

JAMESTOWN

Hot Cocoa Jars

Thursday, Feb. 22 - 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM

James River Senior Center - 419 5th St. NE

Succulent Potted Plants

Thursday, Mar. 28 - 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM

James River Senior Center - 419 5th St. NE

Young Adult Gathering

FARGO

Valentine's Day Games

Tuesday, Feb. 20, 2024 - 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

RSVP by Tuesday, Feb. 13

Contact Katelyn V. - 701.478.0459

Let's Laugh Day:

Play games and tell jokes

Tuesday, Mar. 19 - 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

RSVP by Tuesday, Mar. 12

Contact Katelyn V. - 701.478.0459

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The impact of Peer Mentoring is beneficial, ranging from increased socialization skills and boosted self-esteem to providing a relatable connection for someone going through similar situations. Peer Mentors play a pivotal role in assisting and guiding individuals in the areas they need the most.

As we approach **Giving Hearts Day**, we invite you to consider donating to Freedom Resource Center by going to www.givingheartsday.org on or before February 8th. Your donation will help us continue our goal toward a more inclusive community and empowered future. Let's celebrate 35 years of making a difference together! To learn more about how you can get involved, contact Freedom Resource Center today.

FREEDOM RESOURCE CENTER'S HISTORY

In the year 1986, something special began to stir in Fargo-Moorhead. Bruce Kolding had a vision – a Center for Independent Living. And that's where our story at Freedom Resource Center began, with the passion of people who wanted to make a difference.

You see, back then, Options was taking off in East Grand Forks as a Center for Independent Living. Nate Aalgaard, part of the Options Board of Directors, found himself at a meeting where Bruce shared his plans and asked for assistance. However, Options had its hands full with its own challenges.

Fast forward to 1989 – the group in Fargo-Moorhead secured their nonprofit status and funding from the North Dakota Department of Human Services, the Otto Bremer Foundation, and some other smaller grants. November of that year was the grand opening of Freedom Resource Center's first office in Moorhead. Making a vision become reality.

One of the biggest challenges that Freedom Resource Center faced was the selection of the first Executive Director. That decision sent ripples through the journey. Bruce, the force behind Freedom, had his eye on the director's chair, but the board had a different plan.

Navigating the uncharted waters of a young organization, Nate Aalgaard spotted a common hurdle- nobody had any experience in what they were trying to accomplish. On top of that, Centers for Independent Living require over half of the team to be people with disabilities. The reality was many people with significant disabilities simply did not have the training or opportunity to be on a board of directors.

From 1989 to 1996, Freedom's story unfolded with a mix of Executive Directors, interim leaders, and periods of directorial voids. Board members even took turns as "acting" directors sharing in an ever-evolving styles and priorities until former director, Nate Aalgaard stepped in serving 24 years in his position until his passing in 2020. Change became a constant companion, shaping the identity of Freedom Resource Center

As we celebrate our 35th Anniversary in 2024, Freedom Resource Center invites you to be a part of it. It's not just history; it's the journey of regular people doing extraordinary things together.



ANNUAL SPRING APPRECIATION LUNCHEON AWARDS EVENT

Do you know someone or a group in the community that is making an impact for people living with a disability who deserves to be recognized for their efforts?

This special event is dedicated to recognizing outstanding volunteers, champions of disability rights, and employers who actively support individuals with disabilities. It's about honoring those who are making a greater impact in our community for people with disabilities.

This event will be held **May 16, 2024**, at Avalon Event Center in Fargo. It will also include an online silent auction that starts Monday, May 13th and ends with the close of the luncheon on May 16th. Donations are appreciated.

Nominate Someone! Deadline to nominate is **March 18**.

Accessibility Award
Advocate of the Year Award
Larry Chial Leadership Award
Distinguished Service Award
Employer of the Year Award
Youth Advocate of the Year Award
Volunteer of the Year Award

Go to www.freedomrc.org to submit your nomination. Email freedom@freedomrc.org for any questions.

GIVING HEARTS DAY EARLY GIVING IS HERE!

Imagine the impact of your partnership with us. By joining forces with Freedom Resource Center, you become a catalyst for change, enabling us to make a real difference in the lives of those we serve. As we set our sights on a bold mission for 2024, aiming to raise \$35,000 in celebration of 35 years, we invite you to be a crucial part of our success story.

You can make a difference by donating today and be part of our journey toward a more inclusive and empowered future.

Donate here: <https://app.givingheartsday.org/#/charity/54>



PEER MENTOR PROGRAM FAQ'S

Q: What is a Peer Mentor?

A: Peer mentors are volunteers with valuable personal experience, who donate their time to guide someone on their own path to independence.

Q: Do I have to have a disability to be a Peer Mentor?

A: Yes, you must identify as having a disability.

Q: What are the requirements and how do I become a Peer Mentor?

A: Have a desire to help others, be dependable, and complete our brief application and mentor training including a background check with Katelyn Vilmo, Independent Living Advocate/Peer Mentor Specialist.

LEGISLATIVE NEWS

The Ninety-third Session of the Minnesota Legislature is scheduled to reconvene Monday, February 12, 2024, at 12 Noon. Find more information on how to follow House and Senate bills at leg.mn.gov/leg/trackbill. The 2023 Legislative Session exceeded all expectations and ended as one of the most consequential legislative sessions in Minnesota history. Not since the "Minnesota Miracle" of 1973 has our state seen such investments in human services, health, transportation, education, and infrastructure.

Credit to Minnesota Council on Disability and Minnesota Legislature

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"The premier leader of disability rights
in the region for more than 35 years."



Giving Hearts Day

Help someone.

“NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US.”

-Judi Chamberlin-

Donate Today! »



Donate online at givingheartsday.org or in-person at any of our 5 locations.
Fargo, ND | Fergus Falls, MN | Jamestown, ND | Lisbon, ND | Wahpeton, ND

LOCATIONS: ND Fargo • Jamestown • Lisbon • Wahpeton | MN Fergus Falls