

THE Independent

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

DECEMBER 2024

A Story of Hope, Trust, and Gratitude

FYI

All Freedom offices will be closed December 24, 25, and January 1 in observance of the holidays.

Save the Date

- Giving Hearts Day - February 13, 2025
- Spring Luncheon - May 8, 2025

FARGO

Freedom In Action

To register for Fargo events, call 701.478.0459

Pie Day and Listening Session

Tuesday, Jan. 21 - 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

RSVP to Katelyn by Tuesday, January 14th

FIA Handprint Flamingo Art

Tuesday, Feb. 11 - 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

RSVP to Sarah by Tuesday, February 4th

Young Adult Gathering (Ages 16-25)

Create a Vision Board

Tuesday, Jan. 14 - 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

RSVP to Katelyn by Tuesday, January 7th

Socialize and Play Games

Tuesday, Feb. 18 - 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

RSVP to Katelyn by Tuesday, February 11th

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When Tammy arrived at the YWCA, she felt lost and unsure of how to move forward. It was during this challenging time that she discovered Freedom Resource Center. **“I didn’t know how to ask for help, and when I went to Freedom Resource Center, they were so nice that I had to push them away at first,”** she said. Despite her initial hesitation, Tammy found the understanding and support she desperately needed.

Katelyn Vilmo, Independent Living Advocate/Peer Mentor Specialist, and Gibb, Independent Living Advocate/Transition Coordinator, were instrumental in Tammy’s journey. **“They cared about me and moved forward with me,”** Tammy recalled.

Gibb worked with Tammy to get essential items for her home through the North Dakota Transition and Diversion Pilot Program (TDPP). **“I didn’t have anything, and he helped me get things for my house. He didn’t get upset with me when we were in the store. It was remarkable how he showed kindness and patience,”** Tammy shared. For Tammy, this act of kindness marked a turning point. **“It really helped me with my independence to the point where it’s okay to trust some people again. It’s okay to ask for help.”**

Katelyn also made a lasting impression. She built a professional and compassionate relationship with Tammy, respecting her beliefs and helping Tammy manage her finances. **“She understood my beliefs and how I needed to pray in situations. She never judged me and was always there to help with budgeting, making calls, and faxing paperwork,”** Tammy said.

Katelyn also worked in partnership with Fix it Forward to secure Tammy a referral for a much-needed car repair, ensuring she had reliable transportation to maintain her independence.

Tammy’s time at Freedom Resource Center has been filled with meaningful experiences that have helped her rebuild trust and confidence. She remembers the small gestures, like being offered water with “those little ice cubes,” as moments that brought her joy.

She also recalls participating in programs and events that meant so much to her such as:

- Learning to declutter through classes that taught her to donate items she no longer needed.
- Attending the Red Hawks baseball game, which brought much-needed laughter and fun.
- Painting pumpkins with friends at the Fargo October Freedom In Action event.
- Understanding her right to vote and learning that having a disability doesn’t prevent her from making her voice heard.

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What’s Inside

- » Advocacy Spotlight
- » New Board of Directors
- » A Year in Review

FYI

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FERGUS FALLS

To register for Fergus Falls events, call Joyce or Leigh at 218-998-1799

Freedom In Action

Happy New Year Meal

Tuesday, Jan. 14 - At the FRC Office

Social starts at 11:30 AM

Meal served at 12:00 PM

Must pre-register by Jan. 7th.

No late registrations!

JAMESTOWN

To register for Jamestown events, call 701.252.4693 for Ashley

Freedom In Action

Events held at the Freedom Office

300 2nd Ave. NE Suite 207, Jamestown

Hot Cocoa in a Jar

Tuesday, Jan. 21 - 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM

Young Adult Gatherings

Tuesday, Jan. 7 - 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

IL Skills Class

Decluttering

Tuesdays, Jan. 7 - Feb. 25

10:00 AM - 11:30 PM

VALLEY CITY

To register for Valley City events, call 701.252.4693 for Ashley

Freedom In Action

Events held at The Vault

223 Central Ave., Valley City

Young Adult Gatherings

Tuesday, Jan. 7 - 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM

IL Skills Class

Decluttering

Thursdays, Jan. 9 - Feb. 27

2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

*Reasonable accommodation requests for IL Skills Classes can be requested up to two weeks prior to the events.

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Through these experiences, Tammy built connections and embraced a sense of community. **“People who go to Freedom Resource Center are like friends. I’m so thankful and grateful.”**

Tammy’s journey has led her to a brighter future filled with hope. **“My outlook for the future is sunshine with hope in it, knowing that I’m going forward with my friends at Freedom Resource Center.”**

Your Support Can Change Lives

Tammy’s story is just one example of the countless lives transformed through the work we do. From providing practical resources and emotional support to fostering independence and community, we are dedicated to empowering people with disabilities.

As we approach the end of the year, we invite you to make a difference. **Donate today to support the mission of Freedom Resource Center, helping to increase independence for people with disabilities.**

- Donations can be mailed to: 2701 9th Ave S, Suite H, Fargo, ND 58103
- Search for “Freedom Resource Center” at www.givinghearteday.org
- Or simply scan the QR code below.

Together, we can create brighter futures filled with hope, independence, and possibility.



CORE SERVICE SPOTLIGHT: ADVOCACY

What does Advocacy mean?

Advocacy means pleading an individual’s or a group’s cause or speaking or writing in support of an individual. It can involve representing an individual or speaking on their behalf before private entities, organizations, or agencies. Advocacy is important in the advancement of socio-economic causes as it empowers, rallies, and motivates people in support of ideas and solutions to overcome barriers and achieve goals.

What are some examples of Advocacy provided by Freedom Resource Center?

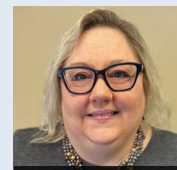
Accompanying consumers to meetings (including city, county, state legislative meetings). Assisting with voter registration. Assisting with Americans with Disabilities Act issues related to reasonable accommodations. Providing advocacy on behalf of a consumer’s rights as a person with a disability.

How does Freedom Resource Center recognize achievement in disability rights advocacy?

Every year Freedom awards the Advocate of the Year award to an individual or group who has made a significant contribution to the advancement of independent living. Their efforts could include outstanding leadership, political support, pioneer work, financial contributions, research, education, organizational support, and empowerment of people with disabilities. Several other awards are also presented to community leaders, peer mentors, employers, and youth for significant contributions. All their work is made possible through advocacy.

NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gretchen Dobervich lives in Fargo with her husband Eric and works at North Dakota State University and serves in the North Dakota Legislature House of Representatives. She attended Minot State University with a Bachelor of Social Work degree and NDSU with a Master of Public Health degree. Gretchen is a licensed social worker. She is actively engaged as a volunteer in various groups focused on quality of life in her community.



GRETCHEN DOBERVICH

Sean Kiernan lives in Fargo where he has lived for more than 30 years. In his early years his career was in the culinary industry, until 5 years ago when he went back to college for business and became an SRES Realtor. Sean works with seniors helping them transition from their homes to independent living or assisted living. He has a daughter who lives in Fargo and is a nurse at Sanford and is married with 3 pets. Sean is a caregiver for his mother, an entrepreneur and a solution solver.



SEAN KIERNAN

A Year in Review

As we close out this milestone year, we reflect with gratitude on 35 years providing services that increase independence for people with disabilities. This year has been a celebration of the progress we've made and a chance to renew our commitment to the important work that lies ahead.

Throughout 2024, Freedom had the privilege of assisting 659 people in working towards their goals for greater independence. We provided 2,813 information and referral services. Additionally, our essential services, including advocacy, peer mentoring, transition services, and relationship-building events, have made a meaningful impact in communities across our service area. Our Freedom in Action events have been especially memorable, offering opportunities for socialization, relationship-building, and skill development. These gatherings embody the heart of our mission—creating inclusive spaces where everyone can thrive.

A significant highlight of the year was sending staff to the NCIL (National Council on Independent Living) conference in Washington, DC. This year's focus was on uniting as a movement to advocate for our priorities. Participating in the march to the Capitol, meeting with representatives on the Hill, and learning from others in the Independent Living community was an encouraging reminder of the power of collective action in advancing disability rights.

From our Appreciation Luncheon—where we honored outstanding volunteers and champions for disability



inclusion—to our unforgettable 35th Anniversary Open House and ribbon-cutting, every event reminded us of the incredible network of supporters, staff, and consumers who make our work possible.

We began the year with Giving Hearts Day, our largest fundraiser, which continues to be a vital source of support for the programs and services we offer. As we prepare to kick off another Giving Hearts Day on February 13, 2025, we're energized by all we've accomplished this year and motivated to do even more in the future.

Thank you for standing with us during this important milestone year!



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WWW.FREEDOMRC.ORG



Giving Hearts Day

YOU Can Help Someone

“**NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US.**”
-Judi Chamberlin-

Partner with Freedom Resource Center to help us reach our \$35,000 goal!

Your support provides life-changing services that increase independence for people with disabilities, creating a world where independence and inclusion are possible for everyone.

Change a life with your donation on or before Giving Hearts Day.



To donate, go to www.givingheartsday.org or scan the QR code.

DONATE HERE

Happy Holidays
&
Happy New Year!

Thank you for your support and look forward to another memorable year ahead. Warmest thoughts and best wishes during this holiday season!