

THE Independent

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

DECEMBER 2025

MICHELLE'S PATH TO INDEPENDENCE

FYI

All Freedom Offices will be closed Wednesday and Thursday, December 24th and 25th, in observance of Christmas, and Thursday, January 1st in observance of New Year's Day.

SAVE THE DATE:

- **Giving Hearts Day**
February 12, 2026
- **Appreciation Luncheon**
May 7, 2026
- **Freedom Resource Fair**
September 29, 2026

**Reasonable accommodations can be requested up to two weeks prior to Freedom events.*

**All events are free to attend unless a cost is noted.*

FARGO

To register for Fargo events, call Katelyn or Sarah at 701.478.0459. All Fargo events will be held at 2701 9th Avenue South Suite H, Fargo.

FREEDOM IN ACTION

Listening Session

Tuesday, Jan. 13 - 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM
RSVP by Tuesday, Jan. 6

Creative Writing

Tuesday, Feb. 17 - 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM
RSVP by Tuesday, Feb. 10.

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When Michelle first walked through the doors of Freedom Resource Center's (FRC) Fergus Falls office, she was quite unsure, but hopeful. A close family friend came with her, someone who had always looked out for her and her family over the years.

She talked about her struggles and the things she wanted for herself but couldn't quite reach on her own. **"I tried by myself, but I wasn't getting anywhere,"** Michelle said.

It wasn't that she lacked motivation. It was that the world around her often felt too big, too fast, and too far away. But here, someone listened. Really listened. And that's where things began to change.

Michelle's first goal was to feel connected again. To be part of something. When she learned about *Freedom In Action (FIA)*, our monthly social activities, she decided to give one a try. That December, she attended a concert at the Fergus Falls Center for the Arts, where Mandy Harvey, a singer who is deaf, performed. It was the first time Michelle had gone to a social event without her family since she graduated high school in 2006.

"It felt good," she said. "It was exciting!"

That simple step showing up, being there, opened a door. Soon, Michelle joined more Freedom In Action events. At first, she sat quietly, taking it all in. Then, at our holiday meal, something shifted.

"I was nervous at first," she said. "But then I got comfortable. Eating and chatting seems to help." And it did. Month after month, Michelle kept coming back. She hasn't missed one in two years.



"The overall feeling at FRC has helped me be more interactive in my life," she shared. "And I think it could help others, too."

It wasn't just social skills she was rebuilding; it was confidence.

Michelle began learning everyday life skills, things that helped her feel more capable in her own home. With her advocate, she learned to cook using whatever was available in our office.

They made vegetable tacos in the microwave, not exactly gourmet, but a start. Michelle laughed as she remembered: "They weren't too bad," she said surprising even herself, since vegetables weren't usually her favorite.

She started trying new things: pizza, potatoes, brownies. Then, another consumer donated an air fryer and toaster oven to her. Another skill she practiced at Freedom.

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WHAT'S INSIDE

- » Luncheon Nominations
- » Wrapping Up 2025



YOUNG ADULT GATHERINGS (AGES 16-25)

Breakfast Pizza and Games

Tuesday, Jan. 13 - 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM
RSVP by Tuesday, Jan. 6

Art and Craft Day

Tuesday, Feb. 10 - 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM
RSVP by Tuesday, Feb. 3

FERGUS FALLS

To register for Fergus Falls events, call Joyce or Leigh at 218.998.1799. All Fergus Falls events will be held at 125 West Lincoln #1, Fergus Falls.

FREEDOM IN ACTION

Cinch Clay Pots

Tuesday, Jan. 13 and Jan. 27 - 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM
Must attend both dates

JAMESTOWN

To register for Jamestown events, call Ashley at 701.252.4693. All Jamestown events will be held at 300 2nd Avenue NE, Suite 207, Jamestown.

FREEDOM IN ACTION

Glove Decorating

Tuesday, Jan. 20 - 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM
RSVP by Friday, Jan. 16

Topic to be Determined

Tuesday, Feb. 17 - 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM
RSVP by Friday, Feb. 13

YOUNG ADULT GATHERING (AGES 16-25)

Tuesday, Jan. 6 - 1:30 PM - 2:30 PM
RSVP by Friday, Jan. 2

Tuesday, Feb. 3 - 1:30 PM - 2:30 PM
RSVP by Friday, Jan. 30

INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS CLASS

Healthy Relationships

Tuesdays, Jan. 20 - Mar. 17 - 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM
RSVP by Friday, Jan. 16

VALLEY CITY

To register for Valley City events, call Ashley at 701.252.4693. All Valley City events will be held at The Vault - 223 Central Avenue, Valley City.

INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS CLASS

Healthy Relationships

Thursdays, Jan. 22 - Mar. 19 - 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM
RSVP by Friday, Jan. 16

YOUNG ADULT GATHERING (AGES 16-25)

Tuesday, Jan. 6 - 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM
RSVP by Friday, Jan. 2

Tuesday, Feb. 3 - 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM
RSVP by Friday, Jan. 30

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"I've been doing a lot more cleaning at home," Michelle said. "I learned cleaning skills here and use those skills at home."

Little by little, she built habits that added up to independence. She began riding the bus on her own, setting up rides herself, finding confidence in the small routines of daily life. She even found her voice in community discussions, speaking up at a listening session about transportation.

"It felt really good to be a part of it where people listened to me," she said.

When Michelle looks back now, she sees a different person than the one who first walked through our doors.

"I've improved a lot," she said. "Definitely better now than I was. I'm getting out so much more. I've learned a lot and the skills I've learned have been sticking."

She paused for a moment before adding something simple, but powerful: **"I felt nervous and anxious when I first came in... but I felt hopeful when I left. Like it was the ideal thing to do and it was."**

Michelle didn't need anyone to change her life for her; she just needed a place to begin again. Someone to walk beside her, listen, and remind her that she could do it.

That's what your support makes possible.

Every donation, every act of kindness, helps create moments like this where someone takes a chance, and starts to believe in themselves again. Because freedom isn't something we're given. It's something we build together.

As we look toward Giving Hearts Day, we're reminded that every story like Michelle's begins with a single moment of courage and continues because someone chooses to care.

Your generosity makes room for people to rediscover their confidence, their voice, their community, and their own sense of possibility. It helps create the kind of support where a person walks in feeling unsure... and walks out feeling hopeful.

In the coming year, your gift will help more people take those first steps toward the life they want to build. Steps that start small, a shared meal, a new skill, a ride on the bus, but grow into lasting independence.

Thank you for helping make that possible. Thank you for believing in what people can become when they're supported, included, and met with compassion.

This Giving Hearts Day, you're not just giving. You're opening the door to someone's new beginning.

NOMINATE ALL YEAR ROUND!

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

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

Go to www.freedomrc.org and click on **"Nominate Someone"** to submit your nomination. Deadline to nominate for our 2026 awards is March 16.

Our next Appreciation Luncheon will be held **May 7, 2026.**

AS WE WRAP UP 2025...

As we near the end of 2025, we're taking a moment to reflect on the meaningful experiences, milestones, and moments of connection that have shaped this year at Freedom. With deep gratitude, we look back on the progress we've made together.

Highlights from 2025:

Giving Hearts Day 2025: Our year began with incredible generosity from the community, setting a positive tone for the months ahead.

Appreciation Luncheon 2025: We celebrated the individuals, businesses, and partners who strengthen independent living through their advocacy, support, and commitment to building inclusive community connections.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 35th Anniversary Open House: We honored 35 years of advocacy, accessibility, and independence with an open house filled with community spirit and celebrating the ADA signing.

NCIL 2025 - National Council on Independent Living: Two staff members attended this national conference in Washington, D.C., gaining valuable knowledge and bringing back insights to strengthen our work.

Our First-Ever Freedom Resource Fair: Thanks to an outstanding turnout, this brand-new event was a tremendous success and is now becoming an annual tradition.

APRIL 2025 - Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living: Four staff members attended this national conference in October, held in Portland, Oregon. They connected with peers across the country and expanded their knowledge in rural independent living services.

A New Look for Freedom: We refreshed our logo and color palette, giving Freedom a bright, modern identity that reflects who we are today.

Fargo Office Construction: Our Fargo location underwent a major transformation, bringing a renewed and welcoming space to our staff and consumers.



Thank You for Being Part of Our Year

As we wrap up 2025, our hearts are full. Every program, every event, and every connection we made this year was strengthened by the support of people like you. Whether you attended an event, partnered with us, shared our mission with others, or simply believed in the work we do; your support made a difference!

Thank you for standing with Freedom and for helping us empower individuals to live independently, confidently, and fully. We are deeply grateful for your trust, your encouragement, and your presence in our community.

We look forward to all that 2026 will bring, and we're honored to move into a new year with you by our side.



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2701 9th Ave. S, Suite H
Fargo, ND 58103

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YOU Can Help Someone



Giving Hearts Day

We are bringing back our
Pie in the Face fundraiser for

Giving Hearts Day,

February 12, 2026.

Who do you want to see get pied?

Call us 701-478-0459



Your donation **increases independence** for people with **disabilities.**

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

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



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