

# THE Independent

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

FEBRUARY 2026

## INDEPENDENCE, IMPACT, AND A LITTLE PIE

### FYI

All Freedom Offices will be closed Monday, February 16 in observance of President'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

##### Creative Writing

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

##### St. Patrick's Day Bingo

Tuesday, Mar. 17 - 1:30 PM - 3:30 PM  
Contact Sarah - RSVP by Tuesday, Mar. 10.

##### Intro to Watercolor Techniques

Tuesdays, Mar. 24 & 31 - 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM  
Costs \$5 to Attend  
Contact Gibb or Machaela - RSVP by Mar. 1.

#### YOUNG ADULT GATHERINGS (AGES 16-25)

##### Art and Craft Day

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

##### St. Patrick's Day Bingo

Tuesday, Mar. 17 - 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM  
Contact Katelyn or Sarah - RSVP by Tuesday, Mar. 10.

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Freedom Resource Center is a nonprofit disability rights organization dedicated to serving people with disabilities of all ages. Our mission is simple: **to provide services that increase independence for people with disabilities.** Our vision is just as clear, **a world where people with disabilities are equal, valued participants in society.**

Serving **11 counties in western Minnesota and 10 counties in southeastern North Dakota.** More than half of our board and staff identify as people with disabilities, bringing lived experience, passion, and authenticity to everything we do. When you partner with Freedom Resource Center, you're supporting services that change lives and strengthen communities one person at a time.

This year, we've set a **Giving Hearts Day goal of \$25,000**, honoring the **1 in 4 people living with a disability.** Every dollar raised supports independence, access, and opportunity right here in our region.

And because generosity should be celebrated, we're bringing back a fan favorite... **Pie in the Face!** For every **10th donation**, the pies start flying! Staff, board members, and brave community supporters have volunteered to join in on the fun. Be sure to follow us on Facebook to catch the fun and cheer everyone on.

### Your Support Makes These Services Possible

Thanks to donors like you, Freedom Resource Center provides essential services that help people live independently and with dignity:

- **Information & Referral** - Connecting people to the resources they need
- **Independent Living Skills Training** - Equipping people with skills to thrive in everyday life

- **Peer Mentoring** - Creating connection through shared experiences
- **Individual & Systems Advocacy** - Helping people assert their rights and advocating for systems change.
- **Transition Services** - Helping people remain in their communities, transition from institutions, and supporting youth moving into adult life

The stories below highlight just a few of the lives impacted by these services and the possibilities your support makes real.

After spending time in a nursing facility, Greg was able to return to living independently in the community. His sister and power of attorney, Julie, remembers the experience clearly.

*"The transition was seamless. You explained everything in a way that made it easy to understand our options. This program was a blessing in disguise."*

Julie shared that living in a nursing facility had taken a heavy emotional toll on Greg. He felt isolated, disconnected from family routines, and increasingly depressed. Being back in his own space near familiar faces has made a remarkable difference.

*"If he had stayed in the nursing home, I honestly don't think he would have lasted this long,"* Julie said. *"Now, he*

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### WHAT'S INSIDE

- » Ice Safety Tips
- » Beyond the Job Title
- » Seasonal Affective Disorder
- » Meet Our New Staff



## 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

Learn About and Create a Vision Board  
Wednesday, Feb. 18 - 1:30 PM - 3:30 PM  
Contact Joyce

### BINGO

Wednesday, Mar. 18 - 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM

### Intro to Watercolor Technique

Apr. 29 - 30 - 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM  
Costs \$5 to Attend, Must attend both classes  
Register by April 21

## 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

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

### YOUNG ADULT GATHERING (AGES 16-25)

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

Tuesday, Mar. 3 - 1:30 PM - 2:30 PM  
RSVP by Friday, Feb. 27

## WAHPETON

To register for Wahpeton events, call Raegan at 701.672.1648. All Valley City events will be held at The Vault - 223 Central Avenue, Valley City.

### FREEDOM IN ACTION

Bingo  
Tuesday, Mar. 10 - 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM  
Optimist Shelter - 85 RJ Hughes Drive  
RSVP by Tuesday, Mar. 3

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hasn't been back in the hospital, and he's doing really well."

Another consumer, David, faced challenges simply getting in and out of his home after moving into his own place. While waiting for a permanent ramp, he was connected to Freedom Resource Center's **temporary ramp program**, allowing him to safely and independently navigate his home.

When asked what he wants people to know about Freedom Resource Center, he shared:

"You don't just have resources for one thing. You have the capacity to help in multiple situations." He added, "It's taken a lot of stress off my mind, and it's giving me the freedom to enjoy life."

These stories are just a glimpse of what Freedom Resource Center does every day. We don't promise perfection;

we promise to listen, to support, and to walk alongside each person as they navigate their unique path. Everyone deserves the opportunity to live with independence, dignity, and choice.

## Join Us on Giving Hearts Day: February 12, 2026

Your gift directly supports people like Greg, David, and others across our communities. Help us reach our **\$25,000 goal** so we can continue removing barriers, expanding access, and empowering more individuals to thrive.

To donate, visit **givingheartsday.org** and search *Freedom Resource Center*, stop by one of our local offices, or scan the QR code on the back of this newsletter.

Together, let's make this Giving Hearts Day a celebration of **hope, independence, and community** and maybe a little pie, too!

## ICE SAFETY TIPS

by Nicholas Schulz, Occupational Therapist; OTR/L, Owner of Adaptive Life Therapy

### What is a safe way to go up and down stairs?

For mobility devices, the sequence for moving up the stairs is the good leg goes up first and then the bad leg comes last. When going down the stairs, the sequence is opposite with the bad leg going first.

### What are some tips to safely navigate ice?

- Ice cleats help and are \$15.
- Keep your hands out of pockets so you can effectively catch yourself. Walk flat footed and don't drag your feet.
- A jug such as half-gallon milk that holds cat litter or salt. This can be used to sprinkle along your path and can be stored in walkers.
- There are also ice cane tips available for around \$15. When preparing for the ice, doing exercises beforehand helps. Examples are single leg stands, seated exercise on a yoga ball if safe, and chair stretches.
- Many smart phones have fall detection settings that will call your emergency contacts if you fall.
- It is also a good idea to have a winter buddy. The winter buddy can either come with you to run errands or be notified if you are going outside, for example to check the mail.

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## MEET OUR NEW STAFF



**CALVIN  
SAMEK**

Calvin Samek holds a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work from Minnesota State University Moorhead and an Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts with a Social Service emphasis from Minnesota State Community and Technical College. His educational background is grounded in advocacy, systems navigation, and relationship-centered support. He brings a wide range of professional experience to his work, including roles as a Peer Support Specialist. Outside of work, he enjoys flying kites, bike riding, board games, and outdoor festivals. Most of all, he values time spent with friends and family.

## BEYOND THE JOB TITLE - GIBB SHEETS



### **What is your role at Freedom Resource Center?**

I am an Independent Living Advocate who works with the Transition and Diversion Project (TDP). This grant is designed to help keep people with disabilities out of institutions and living independently in the community. I get to help people learn how to use their voice, advocate for themselves, and remain living independently within their communities.

### **What does a typical week look like for you?**

A typical week involves many meetings focused on the consumers I'm currently working with. This can include lining up movers, completing paperwork, or running errands to help people get the equipment and supplies they need such as shower benches, grab bars, daily living supplies, etc. There are many other things I do throughout the week, but it's hard to describe it all in just a few sentences.

### **Are you a person with a disability?**

Yes, I am. I have anxiety.

### **How does your disability empower you at work?**

My anxiety has been a bit of a double-edged sword. I've learned to live with it and use it in a way that helps me be as efficient as possible at work. Since it wasn't going away, I focused on finding ways to use it to my advantage. It helps keep me very on task, and I tend to respond to calls and emails right away. In a job where people's livelihoods are involved, I've found that timely communication really matters and people appreciate that.

### **What would you like people to know about Freedom Resource Center?**

I want people to know they can come to us for services whenever they need support especially if they are feeling discouraged or alone. I've seen so many people come out stronger, having learned how to advocate for themselves.

A disability is not a negative thing. We are here to support anyone with a disability and help them discover their own voice so they can advocate for themselves.

# SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

Many people go through short periods when they feel sad or unlike their usual selves. Sometimes, these mood changes begin and end when the seasons change. Many people feel "down" or have the "winter blues" when the days get shorter in the fall and winter and feel better in the spring when longer daylight hours return.

Sometimes, these mood changes are more serious and can affect how a person feels, thinks, and behaves. If you have noticed significant changes in your mood and behavior when the seasons change, you may be experiencing seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

In most cases, SAD symptoms start in late fall or early winter and go away during the spring and summer, known as winter-pattern SAD or winter depression. Other people experience depressive symptoms during the spring and summer months, known as summer-pattern SAD or summer depression. Summer-pattern SAD is less common.

SAD is a type of depression characterized by a recurrent seasonal pattern, with symptoms lasting about 4-5 months out of the year. The signs and symptoms of SAD include those associated with depression as well as disorder-specific symptoms that differ for winter-pattern versus summer-pattern SAD.

### **Symptoms of depression can include:**

- Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" mood most of the day, nearly every day, for at least 2 weeks
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of irritability, frustration, or restlessness
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities
- Decreased energy, fatigue, or feeling slowed down
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Changes in sleep or appetite or unplanned weight changes
- Physical aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems that do not have a clear physical cause and do not go away with treatment
- Thoughts of death or suicide or suicide attempts

It is helpful to discuss a personalized treatment plan with a health care provider. A provider can help you decide not only the best treatment option but the best timing to help prevent SAD depressive episodes.

*Source: National Institute of Mental Health*



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YOU Can Help Someone

# Giving Hearts Day

This year, our **goal** is to raise **\$25,000**, honoring the **1 in 4 individuals who live with a disability**. Every gift supports our mission to increase independence and create more opportunities right here in our community.

**For every 10<sup>th</sup> donation** we get, the **pies start flying!** Help us make this Giving Hearts Day one to remember!

Follow the fun on Facebook!



## Giving Hearts Day

February 12, 2026

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](http://www.givingheartsday.org) or scan the QR code.



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