



PEOPLE'S VOICE

Winter 2014

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Mission Statement

To advocate for the freedom of choice for individuals with disabilities to live independently through the removal of all barriers.

There's No Place Like Home

The happy homeowner you see in the picture is Joani Odden of Minot, as she proudly stands in the kitchen of her new home. The road to her success did not come either quickly or easily. With hard work and determination the dream of owning her own home came true in May of this year.

Let's rewind five years, back to January 2008, when Joani first came to Independence, Inc. At that time her personal life had undergone some major changes and she found herself somewhat lost in a landslide of paperwork. With the help of one our Independent Living Specialists, Joani was able to complete the housing application and found an apartment within a month. In January of 2010 she was approved for a 2-bedroom duplex, available through Minot Housing Authority. This move provided more room for her and her two daughters.

Joani continued working with different staff members at Independence, Inc. over the years and made tremendous strides in advocating on her own behalf. For those of us at Independence, Inc. who have worked with Joani, we have seen a remarkable improvement in her self-confidence and her ability to advocate for herself.

In December of 2012, Joani came to our office to tell us she felt it was time to consider owning a home of her own. Her daughters, now teenagers, were anxious to have bedrooms of their own. Joani started a new home search on her own; only coming to see us when she found a place that had possibilities. We did some research, made some phone calls, took a few tours and then waited. Joani had some hesitations, which were not surprising, as she had never bought a home on her own. This was a huge decision. Almost five months later, Joani called to say she was as ready as she was ever going to be. We set up an appointment to take another look at the model home she had been interested in several months before and before we left the office she had signed on the dotted line. Less than a week later, she was officially a brand-new homeowner!



Just recently we asked Joani what she feels her strengths are. Without hesitation she replied, "My strong faith. I believe God will take you where he wants you to be." She also flashes a bright smile when she talks about her family and how supportive they are. Joani is not one to make hasty decisions. She takes the time to come up with a plan and follows through. We are all very happy Joani now has a home to call her own!

Are You Ready for Winter?

*Rhonda Thompson
Community Relations Specialist*

With outside temperatures hovering around 0 degrees these days, it is a good idea to have a winter plan.

- Dress in layers if you must go out, wearing a hat and gloves and waterproof, insulated boots to keep you warm and dry.
- If you have a car, carry extra emergency supplies and keep your gas tank full. A full tank keeps the fuel line from freezing.
- Make sure your home is insulated; you can do this by covering your windows with plastic sheeting on the inside to keep the cold air out.
- You should have at least a 3-day supply of food (non-perishable, easy to prepare), water (1 gallon per person per day) and a 7-day supply of medications and medical supplies (hearing aids with extra batteries, glasses, syringes, cane.) This will be dependent upon your specific needs.
- Other suggested emergency supplies to have include: a flashlight, extra batteries, battery-powered or hand-crank radio, first aid kit, cell phone with charger, extra blankets, warm clothing, non-electric can opener, sand, rock salt or non-clumping kitty litter to make walkways and steps less slippery.
- Don't forget the pet/companion animals, bring them in or keep them in a sheltered area with non-frozen drinking water. Keep extra food on hand for them as well.

For more information on disaster/emergency preparedness, go to redcross.org.

Remember: Be safe and Be prepared.

APRIL in October

*Jill McDonald,
Finance Director*

Independence, Inc. staff and one board member had a phenomenal opportunity of attending the Association for Programs in Rural Independent Living (APRIL) Conference in Tulsa, OK this October. This conference is an intensive 2 ½ day training opportunity for attendees to immerse themselves in the Independent Living Movement and network with other Centers for Independent Living across the nation.

Independence, Inc.'s Youth Transition Specialist Jamie Hardt, was not just an attendee but she was actually a presenter at the conference. She and another youth transition specialist from N.C. collaborated to develop a presentation focusing on youth empowerment in the schools. She was excited to interact with her audience and discuss challenges other Centers have faced in marketing their programs while learning from the various experiences from across the country. She says, "I also came back with many activities and lesson ideas to use in the BEYOND Youth Transition Program, as well as ways to help students in YADA become advocates for themselves and others with disabilities." We are so proud of Jamie's accomplishments and are excited for others to learn from her experience.

One of the newest members to the Independence, Inc. Board of Directors is Kimi Ofsthun. She also attended the APRIL Youth Conference and was a wonderful ambassador for the agency. Kimi was the first youth ever to attend from North Dakota. She won the youth conference challenge to introduce herself to as many people as possible at the conference and get their business card or contact information. She had some stiff competition from her peers; however, her outgoing personality and friendliness paid off when she accepted her award at the banquet on the final evening of the conference. Way to go Kimi!

My Voice

Scott Burlingame,
Executive Director

I want you to think about how you view people with disabilities. Many people who work in the field or who are disability rights advocates view people with disabilities as their friends, their families, and their community. They view them as people who are often, through no fault of their own, denied equal rights and access to society. I am going to let you all in on a little secret, this is not how most of society views people with disabilities. To a vast majority of the population, people with disabilities are seen as objects of pity. They are seen as victims of their circumstances who suffer on a daily basis. They are seen as people that need to be protected from society, and in some cases, people that society needs to be protected from. They are seen as people who must be taken care of or managed, and held to lower standards because of their disability.



This view is very dangerous. When we view people with disabilities as objects of pity, we regulate them to a permanent state of second class citizenry. When we view them as objects of pity, we don't find ways to make them part of mainstream society. When we view them as objects of pity, we don't view them as experts on their own lives, but rather create false expectations of their lives primarily defined by their disability. When we view them as objects of pity, we focus on what they cannot do, not on what they are doing.

So I would challenge each of you to stop the pity. Don't feel sorry for people with disabilities. Don't define people by what they cannot do, but rather by whom they are and what they do. That is all any of us ever ask for. When you do that, you will begin the process of unlocking the under-utilized human potential that is currently being held back as a result of pity.

*Scott Burlingame, Executive Director
Jen Hutchins, Program Director
*Jill McDonald, Finance Director
Connie Klein, Nursing Facility Transition Coordinator
*Pamala Mondragon, Information Specialist
Dawn Olson, Independent Living Specialist
Inez Rose, Independent Living Specialist
*Jamie Hardt, Youth Transition Specialist
*Rhonda Thompson, Community Relations Specialist
***Editorial Board**

Information

If anyone is interested in receiving this newsletter in an alternative format or would like to submit articles or information of interest to individuals with disabilities, contact our office at 839-4724 V/TTD.

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The opinions expressed in "The People's Voice" are not necessarily those of Independence, Inc. Mention of any product, service, or event does not constitute any endorsement or recommendation by Independence, Inc.



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Welcome, Jen Hutchins



My name is Jen Hutchins and I am delighted to be the newest member of the Independence, Inc. team as Program Director.

I was born and raised in Minot but was gone for 17 years while my husband completed his career in the US Air Force. While at various duty stations, I was fortunate enough to work with people with Intellectual and Mental Health disabilities in Hawaii, Alabama, Virginia and Maryland.

I have an amazing husband, Tim and 2 beautiful daughters. Alannah is a junior at Minot State University and is majoring in Accounting. Heather is a senior at Magic City Campus and will study Nursing at Minot State in the fall of 2014.

In my spare time I enjoy Vikings football, reading, fishing, and training and showing my dogs. I look forward to empowering people with disabilities and helping to remove barriers that hinder choice and independent living.