



PEOPLE'S VOICE

Inside This Issue

Minot's First Family 1

Minot's First Family con't..... 2

Upcoming Events 2

My Voice..... 3

My Voice con't..... 4

The Impact of a Word..... 4

The Impact of a Word con't..... 5

What's Wrong..... 5

Twenty Years of Movement 6

New Staff..... 7

Medicare Open Enrollment..... 8

Mission Statement

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

Goals

- To promote the philosophy of independent living.
- To eliminate attitudinal, environmental, and communication barriers which perpetuate discrimination experienced by people with disabilities.
- To replace the perception of disability as a tragedy with a sense of pride, power, and personal style.

Minot's "First Family" A Long Wait for New Beginning

Dee Tischer, Direct Services Coordinator

The happy couple you see in the picture is David and Elaine Braaten of Minot and "Sassy", David's therapeutic dog. Their lives, like so many others in our community, were turned upside-down on June 21, 2011 when the Souris River spilled over its banks and flooded their home. They left behind not only their home, but also David's in-home rod and reel repair business which he started 15 years ago. On that day, they took their last glance at the neighborhood as they knew it.



The Braaten's were fortunate enough to have relatives five miles outside the city limits, and were able to move into the basement of that home while waiting for an accessible unit at the FEMA group site. To further add to the upheaval, Sassy their beloved family member, could not accompany them due to other pets already in the home; she had to be placed at the NDSU animal shelter. This was quite an adjustment for David, as Sassy has been trained to assist David while Elaine works the middle shift at Trinity Homes. Phone service in their temporary living space was sporadic and without access to the kitchen upstairs, David relied upon his granddaughter to assist him with meals and such until she would return to school in September.

On August 1st, the Braaten family was introduced to me through RAFT (Resource Agencies Flood Team) under the leadership of the United Methodist Disaster Response; Independence, Inc. staff members serve as case managers through this program. I was asked to contact David and Elaine to assess their needs and help them navigate through the process. What I did not know was how long the

Continued on page 2...

process would take and how much work and effort would be involved on the part of all of us...

What I do know now, after these past four months, is that David and Elaine are indeed a very strong and committed couple who have personally seen the devastation of three floods here in Minot. They still remain confident in the community itself as they give consideration to repair, rebuild or more than likely, replace their home.

This is not to say there wasn't frustration along the way. Uncertainty as to whether the FEMA home would be truly accessible for David's wheelchair, delays in getting the group site ready, and the long wait for the homes to arrive in Minot, added to the anxiety. But, with the unwavering assistance from Peggy Willis from the FEMA office in Bismarck, we worked hard to get David and Elaine into an accessible FEMA home (called a UFAS unit) at the Minot group site. To hear the absolute joy and relief in their voices when I was able to tell them they would be the first family to move into a UFAS unit at the group site was music to my ears.

David and Elaine officially moved in on October 5th and, as you can see from the picture, they are happy to be reunited as a family, complete with Sassy. The Braaten's now have hope and determination that they will not only survive this setback, but will have time to develop their plans for the future knowing they have a comfortable, accessible, and safe place to live as the long, cold winter approaches.

Although the flood waters have receded and families continue to work long hours to restore and rebuild their homes and their lives, our community members must continue to encourage and support each other. Each day brings new hope that Minot is coming back.



Upcoming Events

Independent Living Skills Classes

Nov 16, 2011	11:00-12:00 PM	Cooking Class – Crockpot Turkey Dinner
Dec 7, 2011	3:30 – 4:15 PM	Fire Safety with John Squires MFD
Dec 16, 2011	2:00 – 4:00 PM	Independence Ribbon Cutting and Holiday Open House

Keep checking our Website for further upcoming events!

<http://www.independencecil.org/Events.aspx>

All classes will be held at the office of Independence, Inc. unless noted otherwise. Please contact our main office at (701) 839-4724 if you plan to attend the class. Hope to see you there!

Scott Burlingame, Executive Director
Colleen Kubler, Finance Director
Dee Tischer, Direct Services Coordinator
Therese Besemann, Systems Change Specialist
Jill McDonald, Independent Living Specialist
Connie Klein, Nursing Facility Transition Coordinator
Pamala Mondragon, Information Specialist
Carly Leffelman, Youth Transition Specialist

ID Statement

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Independence, Inc.
300 3rd Ave. SW, Ste. F
Minot, ND 58701

My Voice

Scott Burlingame, Executive Director

One of my favorite authors of all time is Steven R. Covey, who has written the best-selling book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. In this book, Covey highlights the “habits” that lead to people being successful, including the following imperatives: Independence or Self-Mastery, Interdependence, and Self Renewal. After reading this book a few years back, I have contemplated writing a disability rights version about “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People with Disabilities.” For this copy of *The People’s Voice*, I thought I would highlight what I would consider the first of those important habits, Disability Pride.



Before we even begin talking about the first of the “habits”, I think we have to define what “*effective*” means for a person with a disability. Considering the poverty, unemployment, and community participation rates of the average American with a disability, I guess I would define effective as living independently, being economically self-sufficient (or at least in the process of becoming so), and somehow participating within the community in which you live.

For many people, talking about “disability” and “pride” in the same sentence may seem strange. Many people in our society see disability not as something to be proud of, but rather as a medical condition that should be cured or overcome. This causes many people with disabilities to spend a significant amount of time and effort trying to run and hide from their disability, and when they are unable to do that, they choose to just hide from society. They see their disability as something to be ashamed of.

I don’t blame the people for feeling this way. A large part of our culture views people with disabilities as being broken and defines them by what they cannot do. The media does an amazing job of reinforcing this belief by portraying many people with disabilities as either being objects of pity or as being super inspirational folks who can do amazing things despite their “tragic” situations.

Disability pride allows people with disabilities to come to peace with their disability and develop a sense of acceptance. This allows people to have the same basic hopes, dreams and expectations as anybody else within their peer group. Knowing your disability, knowing how your disability can be accommodated, and being okay with talking about at the right time and place can be difficult. It comes with the comfort that is a result of taking pride in yourself and having the confidence to be okay with your disability.

If we in the disability rights community want to change the lives of people with disabilities, we must start by actively assisting people to get to know themselves better and become proud of who they are; understanding and fully accepting that their disability is a natural part of life. We do this by providing support in a way that encourages acceptance and understanding. We do this by helping to provide a setting where people can hone their acceptance skills. We do this by being fully inclusive and integrating opportunities for people with all types of disabilities to learn from each other and develop the skills they need to be successful.

At Independence, we are committed to helping people with disabilities develop disability

Continued on page 4...

pride. That is why you will see us providing youth with disabilities a transition program that is based on self-acceptance. That is why you will see us providing leadership opportunities for adults, and that is why you will see us promoting opportunities for peer mentoring and group learning opportunities. Our goal is simply to be a place where people can come and begin to feel comfortable about whom they are, so they can begin to become more effective at achieving their individual hopes and dreams.



The Impact of a Word

Jill McDonald, Independent Living Specialist

Verbal language can build up a person, and in the next breath tear him down. Think of the words that come to mind when you describe yourself. How do those words make you feel? I use words like mother, military spouse, Independent Living Specialist, North Dakotan, scrapbooker, photographer, and American to describe myself at different times depending on the situation. Each of these describes a part of me. They have all influenced who I am as a whole, some far more than others. It is important to realize that not one single word defines us. We are a product of our individual experiences.

When a person receives a diagnosis, it can be challenging to not identify as that diagnosis for the person as well as their friends and family. A child with autism should not be labeled autistic. A simple change in language changes the whole feeling people take away, including that child. When someone is called autistic, they lose their identity and can be viewed solely as their diagnosis. They are a child first and foremost. This is a key point in the people first language, by Kathie Snow of www.disabilityisnatural.com. There are several articles regarding creating more inclusive communities.

Kathie's articles emphasize removing words that cause us to feel sorry for individuals with disabilities. Words like "special needs" have a negative connotation. After all, don't we all have differing needs? Why is it necessary to change the lingo for someone with a disability? Let's stop tap-dancing around the giant elephant in our communities and see everyone as individuals rather than labels and communicate the same way!

For the sake of improving relationships within the community, eliminate the word retarded from your vocabulary in reference to individuals; instead use intellectual disability. Our government is on board as well, after passing Rosa's Law just recently. This mandates that the term intellectual disability be used to replace the phrase mental retardation in federal documents (http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/pcpid/docs/Rosas_Law_letter_of_enactment.pdf). This aligns the language used by professionals in the community with the language used by our government and school systems. We still have a long way to go in changing the perceptions and expectations people have when they hear the phrase intellectual disability.

People with disabilities also say it is extremely annoying when people try to make their language over-politically correct. Using a phrase like "handicapable" or emphasizing just how "special" someone is because of their disability is not well received by many but especially the person being referred to.

If someone has a Quality Service Provider (QSP) or an aide with them, address the person to whom you are speaking. For example, if you have a question for the QSP, ask him/her

directly; if the question is directed toward the person with a disability, ask him/her directly.

I will offer a couple other situations to consider before concluding. If someone is hard of hearing, ask them how it works best to communicate with them. They may prefer you sit to one side or the other to better enable them to hear you. If someone uses a wheelchair to get around, ask before taking it upon yourself to push them around your office. When you are not sure how to best approach a situation, ask!

What's Wrong With This Picture?

Therese Besemann, Systems Change Specialist

This designated accessible parking space at a local business appears to be fairly compliant with the ADA Standards for Accessible Design. The parking space is the correct width and length with an adjoining access aisle marked by blue paint.

According to the ADA Standards for Accessible Design, *502.3 Access Aisles: access aisle serving parking spaces shall be 60 inches wide minimum and adjoin an accessible route. Accessible routes must connect parking spaces to accessible entrances. Where possible, it is preferable that the accessible route not pass behind parked vehicles. 502.6 Identification: Parking space identification signs shall include the International Symbol of Accessibility. Signs identifying van parking spaces shall contain the designation "van accessible." Signs shall be 60 inches minimum above the ground surface measured to the bottom of the sign. 502.7 Relationship to Accessible Routes: Parking spaces and access aisles shall be designed so that cars and vans, when parked, cannot obstruct the required clear width of adjacent accessible routes.*

For this parking space to be compliant with the ADA Standards for Accessible Design, it would require the installation of appropriate signs, and a wider access aisle with a curb cut in the sidewalk to adjoin the accessible route to the entrance.



Full Parking Space



Close-Up of Access Aisle

Information

In an attempt to reduce the cost of mailings, please send your e-mail address to pamalam@independencecil.org

If you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please call 701.839.4724 or 1.800.377.5114, or email us at the above address.

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.

The contents of this newsletter were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

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.

Editorial Board: Scott Burlingame,
Colleen Kubler, Jill McDonald

Twenty Years of Movement: The Early History of Vocational Rehabilitation

Carly Leffelman, Youth Transition Specialist

Fifty-four million Americans have a disability and yet, they are not uncommon or rare. Americans with disabilities still experience prejudice and discrimination regularly (Disability Law Center, 2010). Although the Disability Rights Movement is continuing their fight against discrimination, they have made great efforts and change in the past 100 years. In fact, the Disability Rights Movement made its first arguments towards equality and accommodations for all individuals with disabilities in the beginning of the 20th century. Until that time, institutionalizing people with disabilities was common practice. Disabilities were seen as a social flaw or something that needed to be hidden from society.

Industrialization of our nation provided many Americans with jobs; however, many were also very dangerous. Workplace safety was not yet regulated and many people were acquiring injuries on the job that impacted their ability to ever work again. During Theodore Roosevelt's presidency, social welfare concerns were gaining weight on the federal agenda. Americans wanted the federal government to help more in regards to workers with disabilities because it was too large of a financial stress for charities alone. The Federal Employees Compensation Act was passed in 1908 with the purpose of assisting and protecting "federal workers in hazardous occupations." Shortly after this was passed, states expanded the Act to relieve all workers with the responsibility for injuries they obtained while working. Workers compensation had begun in almost every state by 1921 and the government was beginning to use the data collected in order to study the causes and generate preventative strategies (Elliot & Leung 2004).

World War One took common misconceptions, shook them up, and required Americans to look at the social issue in a different light once again. American men went to war able-bodied, able-minded and healthy. Upon returning to the United States after war, they brought with them newly acquired disabilities. Americans did not want their veterans, their heroes, to be placed in the institutions and politicians began working on their behalf. The Soldier's Rehabilitation Act was passed in 1918 and it provided funds for veteran rehabilitation (Elliot & Leung 2004). With more attention and awareness being shined on individuals with disabilities, laws began to expand to include even individuals who did not serve in the military, but still had disabilities that impacted their ability to work. Within a matter of twenty years, Americans had been forced to face this social issue head on. Disability Rights activists were brave, thoughtful, and loud enough for the politicians to hear them. Politicians were beginning to open their minds, add to their budgets, and get creative in order to help serve and protect Americans with disabilities. Taking a look into our past is a great way to feel gratitude for everything the Disability Rights Movement has fought for and gained in the past 100 years. Here is to another 100 years of advancement and longevity for this movement towards equality and acceptance!

Elliot, Timothy R. & Leung, P. (2004). Vocational Rehabilitation: History and Practice. (p. 319-322). Retrieved from <http://epsy.tamu.edu/>

Disability Law Center. (2010). A Brief History of the Disability Rights Movement. Retrieved from http://www.disabilitylawcenter.org/about/a_brief_history_of_dr_movement.html.

New Staff



Happy November! Thank you for the warm welcome; I am so excited to join the Independence Inc. team. My name is Carly Leffelman, and I am the new Youth Transition Specialist. Working with middle school and high school aged students has always been in my future plans. It was my dream to do something extraordinary in a classroom, and Independence Inc. and the school districts I will be working with are allowing me to do just that. The Youth Transition Program has been so much fun to develop, and it's a blast getting to know the students from all over our service area.

I received my degree from Minnesota State University, Mankato, to teach Social Studies to grades 5-12. My fiancé and I moved to Minot from Minnesota in June and we are planning a wedding for next summer. What an exciting year!



Hello, my name is Pamala Mondragon. I am thrilled to be part of the team at Independence Inc. My position is Information Specialist and I am looking forward to meeting you in person or on the phone when you visit our Minot office. Currently, I am a student at Minot State University working on a degree in Developmental Disabilities. I am excited to put my knowledge to good use and teaming up with each of you to remove barriers and working towards the greatest freedom and independence possible. Prior to my time at Minot State, I served in the Air Force for 26 years and retired as a veteran with disabilities. I am eager to assist fellow veterans with disability issues they may be facing.



Originally I am from Colorado, however, since 1986 when I was stationed at Minot AFB I have called Minot home. This community is one of the most resilient I have ever been a part of, and I am very proud to continue to call Minot my home and to have you all for neighbors. Through strength and determination, together we can make a positive difference!

Accessibility Surveys:

Independence, Inc. will provide Accessibility Surveys for homes, businesses, agencies and organizations upon request. A report will be provided with suggestions for increased accessibility and compliance issues pertaining to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Education and Training Opportunities:

Independence, Inc. will do a presentation for your club, agency, organization, or business at no charge! Presentations and resources available include: Disability Awareness, ADA Basics, Employment Issues, Laws and Legal Rights, Accessibility, and more!

Please contact Therese at 701.839.4724 V/TDD or 1.800.377.5114 V/TDD to schedule a presentation or to borrow materials from our Lending Library.



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A Resource Center For Independent Living

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Dee Tischer: Direct Services Coordinator

Jill McDonald: Independent Living Specialist

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