



PEOPLE'S VOICE

Year in Review

Inside This Issue

Individual Services Review
.....1

Community Services Review
.....2

My Voice
.....3

Welcome, Michele Anderson
.....4

Mission Statement

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

Year in Review: Individual Services

Jamie Hardt, Youth Transition Specialist

When people come to Independence, Inc. they are often looking for someone to help them discover solutions to a problem that they are frustrated with. These problems may involve filling out paperwork, navigating health care, employment skills, locating housing, household management; the topics vary from person to person. We dedicate a significant amount of staff time on these Individual Services which are categorized as: Individual Advocacy, Independent Living (IL) Skills Training, Information and Referral, Youth Transition and Peer Mentoring. For the 2013 fiscal year, we provided individual services to 416 consumers, and we responded to 1,962 requests for information.

In the past year, Independence provided 28 IL skills classes. Some topics included: health and wellness, hygiene, basic budgeting, good housekeeping, obtaining a state ID, knowledge of disability, cooking class,

and emergency preparedness. Those who participated were able to learn new skills and engage with others in a fun and social environment.

Types of Disabilities Served	# of Consumers	Age of People Served	# of Consumers
Cognitive	214	Under 5	0
Mental/Emotional	31	5-19	184
Physical	120	20-24	21
Hearing	3	25-59	133
Vision	7	60 and Older	77
Multiple Disabilities	41	Unavailable	1

Independence, Inc. has developed a comprehensive Youth Transition Program that stretches across the service area working with high school students who have a variety of disabilities. The Building and Encouraging Youth Opportunities in North Dakota (BEYOND) program is tailored to meet the needs of each student. Students who complete the program have increased their individual awareness, self-confidence and self-determination. This year, we expanded the BEYOND curriculum for students who have completed the first generation curriculum. The first generation was provided to seven regional high schools and the second generation curriculum was provided at two.

Independence, Inc. provided individual advocacy to 120 individuals. Staff work with people who request our services to determine available options and what best fits the needs of that person. These

Continued on page 2...

individuals were assisted in overcoming barriers to receive access to benefits, services and/or programs that would allow them to continue to live independently. This included helping those who faced barriers in areas such as: employment, transportation, education, community access, and health care.

Through the advocacy efforts of our Nursing Facility Transition Coordinators, five individuals returned to their homes after living in a nursing facility. We were able to overcome barriers by locating housing and care providers to assist individuals once they returned to their communities.

Some other outcomes we are proud of this year include: making a referral to a foster home to prevent one person from moving into a nursing home, referring a veteran with a disability to the North Dakota Association for the Disabled to get help paying for hearing aids, referring people to IPAT to get assistance with finding assistive technology and providing information to first responders on how to communicate with people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

Year in Review: Community Services

Scott Burlingame, Executive Director

I have long believed that for a Center for Independent Living to be effective, we must have a balance between services to individuals and services to the community. Individuals receiving services may be able to achieve their goal in a few meetings whereas community services goals can literally take a lifetime to achieve. However, with a lot of dedication and perseverance, we make real efforts at changing our communities. The types of community services that we provide are Systems Advocacy, Community Education, Collaboration and Networking, and Technical Assistance. Let's take a look at a few of our accomplishments in some of our specific areas of focus for the 2013 fiscal year.

Community Accessibility: In the past year, our staff spent 91 hours working to make our communities more accessible. We supported efforts for the full implementation of the accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and other related laws. This includes providing accessibility surveys and other technical assistance to local cities, businesses and homeowners. We have spent significant amounts of time working with local first responders to insure they are prepared to respond to the diverse needs of people with disabilities in a disaster.

Employment: We spent 48 hours trying to improve employment outcomes and opportunities for people with disabilities. Independence, Inc. supports competitive, community based employment as the first and preferred outcome for people with disabilities. A staff member was the elected Chair of the North Dakota State Rehabilitation Council. We participated in advocacy efforts to restart the North Dakota Governors Committee on the Employment of Persons with Disabilities. We partnered with other agencies on a large alternative career fair that allowed youth with disabilities to learn about good paying jobs that do not require a 4-year degree.

Housing: We spent 32 hours supporting efforts for the expansion and advancement of affordable, accessible housing options for people with disabilities in order to increase the utilization of home and community-based services. This includes writing letters of support for funding additional affordable, accessible housing and participating in efforts to increase the awareness of needs for housing for people transitioning out of a nursing home.

Health Care: We spent a lot of time, over 190 hours, trying to improve health care options and availability to people with disabilities. We support all efforts to ensure full access to all types of health care for all people with disabilities and we educate people with disabilities on the services available to support independent living in the community. We performed multiple outreach visits to all nursing facilities in our service area, participated in committees to improve wellness in people with disabilities, and partnered with other agencies throughout our service area to insure better access to health care and home and community based services.

Transportation: We spent 17 hours in efforts to increase transportation options for people with

Continued on next page...

disabilities in our service area including the expansion of transit service areas and routes. We participated in community meetings on the needs for accessible transportation in North Dakota and promoted the participation by people with disabilities in community transportation surveys.

Collaboration and Networking: In order to effectively build coalitions and collaborative partnerships with other likeminded organizations and people, Independence participated in 29 distinct partnerships on a local, state, and national level. These partnerships allowed us to spread the Independent Living philosophy while partnering with others to remove barriers and increase independent living.

My Voice

Scott Burlingame, Executive Director

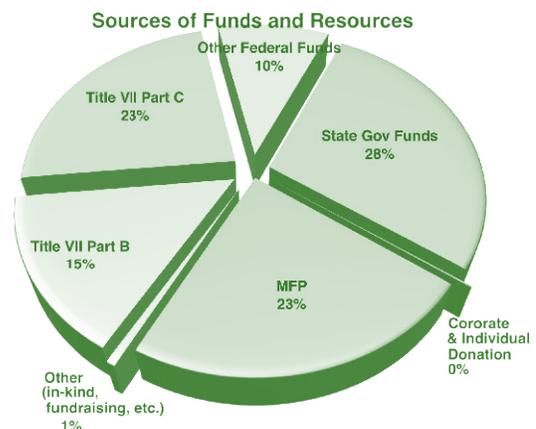
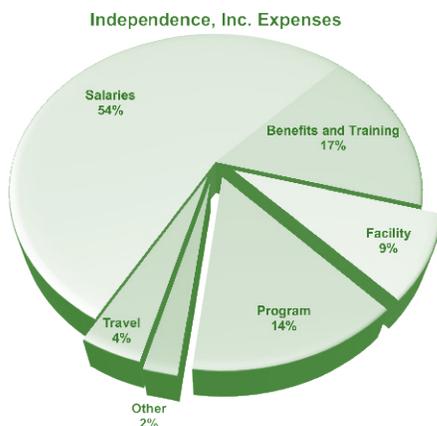
Telling the story of what we do at Independence, Inc. is often difficult to do. We know that our mission is to advocate for the freedom of choice for individuals with disabilities to live independently through the removal of all barriers. However, it can often be very difficult to explain exactly how we do that. So, for the second year in a row, we have decided to dedicate a special edition of “The People’s Voice” to telling the story of our accomplishments during the 2013 fiscal year.



We did some pretty amazing things during the past year. We provided direct services to a record number of people, assisting individuals to develop and accomplish their personalized goals. We worked extraordinarily hard to reach out to the communities we serve, providing hours of community education, outreach, advocacy, and collaboration. We significantly increased our ability to inform the public by building a mailing list, an email data base, a Facebook page, and our website. Finally, we made significant strides to become the first place people think about when they need disability related information and referral.

None of this would be possible without the extraordinary dedication of the staff and board of Independence, Inc. Our all-volunteer Board of Directors help to guide and support the organization as it grows. The board has always been supportive of our efforts to modify our services and to improve our outcomes. Our staff continues to evolve as our organization grows. We have added the new positions of Community Relations Specialist and Program Director to help us to respond to our growing needs. Dawn Olson was elected Chair of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities Council on Community Advocacy. Jamie Hardt presented on her youth program to her national peers at the Association of Programs in Rural Independent Living’s conference in Tulsa, OK. Additionally, Independence, Inc. staff have taken leadership roles in many state and local community collaborations.

I also know that we will do even better things in the future. As you will see elsewhere in this edition, we have hired a new staff and are in the process of opening an office in Bottineau to better serve the eastern part of our service area. We have many new opportunities for people with disabilities to achieve their goals, to become active in their communities, and to become partners in changing their world. I hope you will follow our progress in “The People’s Voice”.



Welcome, Michele Anderson!



My name is Michele Anderson and as of January 16th, 2014 I have been gifted with the opportunity to join Independence, Inc. as an Independent Living Specialist.

I will be serving as an Independent Living Specialist in the following four counties: Bottineau, Rolette, McHenry and Pierce, and will do so from our new office in Bottineau, which is currently under construction.

I was born and raised in Bottineau but lived out of state for twenty plus years. Most of the years were spent in Kansas where I raised my family and earned my Social Work Degrees at Wichita State University. I returned to North Dakota in 2010 when I accepted a position in a local nursing home facility.

I was first introduced to the core values of social work when I was a student at what was then known as Mary College. Some of the core values: advocacy, education, social justice, self-determination and empowerment resonated with what I believe. I quickly realized that those same core values are shared by Independence, Inc. and look forward to working together to actualize freedom of choice and independence for those living with disabilities.

*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
Michele Anderson, 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.

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.