



PEOPLE'S VOICE

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Consumer Corner

Dee Tischer, Direct Services Coordinator



In this issue, I am pleased to introduce to all of you an inspiring young woman, Ms. Debbie Denatdeale. Debbie is an active person in the Minot community, both socially and professionally and we'd like to share her story with you.

Debbie became a consumer at Independence, Inc. back in the fall of 2009. At that time, her goals were to learn skills to navigate through the technical world of the computer age; email, information searches, creating documents such as a resume, and Facebook, to name a few. She also was interested to work on keyboarding to increase her typing speed and skills to prepare for future employment. Debbie faithfully came to weekly one-on-one computer skills classes. We were able to watch as her confidence increased, and before long she decided she wanted to work independently in the computer lab here in our office. Debbie is now a familiar face at Independence, Inc. as she continues to come in regularly to work on the computer; most recently she updated her resume as she prepares for job interviews. In addition to working on the computer, Debbie is also a regular participant in our Independent Living Skills group classes.

As for her social life, she is one busy lady! She helped organize one of Minot's roller derby teams, participates in Special Olympics, works out at the YMCA, plays on a softball and basketball team, and she spent many weeks last summer volunteering at the Red Cross disaster unit handing out cleaning and sanitation supplies following the flood.



Since Debbie has been a part of Independence services for so long we asked her if she would be interested in writing a letter to Rep. Chet Pollert, Health and Human Services Committee, in support of statewide Centers for Independent Living during the last ND Legislative Session. She was happy to provide a voice for persons with disabilities. Here are some of the things she

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.

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wanted Rep. Pollert to know:

“In the cooking classes, it gave me the skill in knowing how to prepare simple items which are healthy and quick, without using the microwave or stove. I would never think of these simple recipes that I can use at home.”

“In the typing classes....knowing where home row is and which finger reaches for the certain button. Plus I’ll never know when I might have a job that deals with computers and Microsoft.”

“Self-defense class...tools in knowing what to do when I am in trouble by someone who comes along and attacks me or someone else.”

“I enjoy the classes at Independence, Inc. It’s a lot of information that the staff gives to us. So I can apply it to my life of living in my apartment.”

The staff at Independence, Inc. is proud of Debbie’s accomplishments and we applaud her efforts to maintain an independent life-style and continue to be an actively involved young adult in our community.

We encourage anyone who wants to share their story with our readers to contact Dee Tischer at 839-4724. Your success is our success!

Upcoming Events

Independent Living Skills Classes

June 19, 2012 1:00 – 3:00 PM Requesting an Accommodation at Work
Presenter: Vickay Gross, Coordinator/Advocate, Protection and Advocacy

This class will provide information on what the Americans with Disabilities Act states regarding reasonable accommodations and information on how to request an accommodation. There will be a small group activity that will give the audience an opportunity to identify problems on the job and possible accommodations and how to request accommodations in writing. Please call prior to the event to register.

July 12, 2012 Starts at 6:00 PM Celebrating Independence Picnic at Hammond Park

Please join us for this annual event an evening of fun, good food, and playing games and with some wonderful people! Lots of laughs and great conversation is guaranteed! To ensure we have plenty of supplies, please call the office by 4:30 July 10, 2012 to register.

August 8, 2012 1:00 – 3:00 PM Nutrition Updates

Have you been wondering what the latest nutritional facts are today? Is it a pyramid or a plate? Trisha from NDSU Extension Service will be here to solve that mystery for us. She will explain the latest model of nutrition and the most effective ways to better manage your dietary needs. Please join us for these updates to make better food choices that will enhance your overall health. Remember, please call to preregister!

All classes will be held at the office of Independence, Inc. Please contact our main office at **701.839.4724** to register for classes. Hope to see you there!

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

ID Statement

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My Voice

Scott Burlingame, Executive Director

A little part of my story that not everybody may know is that I am a person with a disability. I often tell people I have a form of dyslexia. Which is sort of true, however, over 25 years ago when I was first diagnosed, it was actually called a Visual Processing Disorder. Because nobody knows what that is, I just stick with saying either a “learning disability” or say a form of dyslexia.

When I first got the diagnosis, in about 8th grade, it was a pretty big deal. I was a horrible student who was often told by people I cared about that I was a horrible student because I was not trying hard enough. Even then I understood what hard work was. Hard work to me was what I did working on my family farm during summer vacation. Hard work was during track when Coach Garmen dropped me off 6 miles from town, all by myself, and told me to run home. Hard work was getting up on Sunday mornings in the middle of winter to deliver the newspaper hours before anybody had any interest in reading it. I also knew that school was hard work, and I knew that I was working really hard at it, but I was constantly frustrated that I could not do better.

Now I wish I could tell you that getting a disability diagnosis made everything better. However, I was a teenage boy and the last thing I wanted was some doctor with a fancy title giving me a diagnosis that meant nothing to me or anybody I knew. I instantly rejected the diagnosis and decided that I was just a bad student, that learning was not for me, and that I would just keep quiet and hope and pray nobody asked me to do anything academically above the minimum requirements.

I passed high school with a GPA that said “This kid will never work in any type of professional field.” My life path was set, some kind of field in which I could work with my “hands” and not my “head”. The only problem was I was not particularly adept at working with my hands. So I decided I could be a police officer. I moved away from my hometown and enrolled in a small community college in Northwestern Minnesota.

Now at this point, college scared me. This was prior to the time in which every college student was required to use a lap top, or even had access to a PC most of the time. I knew that writing, and in particular, spelling was going to be a major problem for me in college. So for graduation, I asked my parents for a Smith Corona Personal Word Processor. Now the Smith Corona Personal Word Processor was sort of the evolutionary link between a typewriter and a PC. It looked like a typewriter and acted like a typewriter, but had two lines of text that allowed me to save an edit my work. It also had an amazing function that I had dreamed for years about: SPELL CHECKER!

This was the difference between night and day for me. My first report card from college was good enough to earn me a spot on the President’s List. For the first time in my life, I had realized that higher learning was not out of reach from me. This amazing (and by today’s standards simple) piece of assistive technology allowed me spend less time worrying about how I was spelling, and more time worrying about what I was trying to write.

Within the next few years, I began to serve people with disabilities, and eventually had the opportunity to come and work in the Disability Rights community. I have a great job, with wonderful co-workers, a wonderful and supportive family, and some of the most amazing friends anybody could ask for. My life is pretty good and I am eternally grateful not only for that Smith Corona Personal Word Processor that played such a major part in the path that I am on, but for all the



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amazing people who believed in me when nobody else did. I have dedicated my life to Disability Rights because I want the opportunity to reach out and help anybody else who is struggling, as I did, and help them find their path.

Today, I am still a person with a disability. This very article will not only be put through spellcheck, but will also be proofread by several people. That is just part of who I am, and over time, I have learned to accept it.

However, all of these experiences have only somewhat prepared me for my newest role in the disability community. I am now a parent of a child with a disability.

My 11 year-old son TJ was diagnosed with a disability, a specific learning disability due to his visual perceptual difficulties and processing (yep, the same type I was diagnosed with all those years ago). One would think that knowing my story, and the fact that I am an Executive Director of a Disability Rights Organization, this would be no big deal to me, but it is. Parents always want their children to have an easier path than they did. Like many parents going through something like this, it took me a little while to become comfortable with it.

However, one thing I am sure of is that TJ's disability will only be a footnote in his life's story. Since I was first diagnosed, we have passed the Americans with Disabilities Act, we have significantly improved our education system for children with disabilities, and we have, for the most part, a workforce that is willing to accommodate employees.

At a recent community discussion, I was asked "What is the difference between a Center for Independent Living (CIL) and other community service providers?" This is sort of a complicated answer, but if I was forced to simplify it, I would say that CIL's are first and foremost organizations of people with disabilities who have dedicated their lives to improving the lives of others with disabilities. Because of my experiences with my own disability and because of my experiences as a parent of a child with a disability, I bring a first person perspective to all I do.

Thank You Colleen!

Scott Burlingame, Executive Director

On October 14, 1995, a few weeks after the doors were first open at Independence Inc., Colleen Kubler began her employment as Information Specialist. She would eventually hold a variety of roles in our company; ranging from Administrative Assistant, Finance Manager, and Finance Director, as well as on several occasions, serving as the acting Executive Director. Now, almost 17 years later, Colleen has made the decision to leave the Minot area, and unfortunately for us, will be leaving Independence at the end of May.

It is impossible in a few words to summarize the impact Colleen has had on our organization. Through an amazing amount of turnover, turmoil, and transition, Colleen has always been a rock. While most of her work as a finance director may have been behind the scenes, it is without any sort of reservation that I can say that Independence Inc. would not be in existence today if not for her leadership and dedication.

We will all be sad to see her leave, and this organization will not be the same without her. All of the staff and Board at Independence would like to offer their sincere appreciation to Colleen for all of her hard work and wish her nothing but happiness as she begins her new life!

Recreation in Minot

Therese Besemann, Systems Change Specialist

In this edition of the People's Voice we will provide some information about another family recreational spot in Minot. Our featured recreational destination is North Hill Bowl (NHB) located on Minot's north hill at 1901 N. Broadway.



North Hill Bowl has been a family owned and operated business in Minot since 1957. They are open seven days of the week and provide visitors with more activities than a game of bowling. North Hill Bowl offers a Pro Shop, Restaurant and

the Lucky Strike Lounge, Casino & Links. They have a variety of leagues. You must be at least 21 years of age to participate in the pool, dart, and golf leagues as those games are located within the lounge. The Lucky Strike restaurant offers many choices for a quick meal or snack. They have a full service pro shop as well. Everyone can bowl, from toddlers to the elderly. NHB has bowling league for youth, men, women, and mixed couples. For those of us with physical limitations and children under the age of ten, bowlers have the option to have 'bumpers' along the gutters to ensure every ball will go the length of the lane. NHB has 'bowling ramps' to help wheelchair users and people with lower extremity weakness or poor balance enjoy participating in bowling. For more information, please contact North Hill Bowl at 852-4108 or email at nhbowl@srt.com.

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,
Jill McDonald, Pamala Mondragon

Personal Experience

Do you have a personal story that was inspiring or life changing? Independence, Inc. is interested in hearing your life experience and may wish to publish it in Independence, Inc.'s newsletter, the People's Voice. If you would like to share your story/experience with others, please call Dee at 839.4724 or toll free at 800.377.5114.

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.

A Penny for Your Thoughts

Jill McDonald, Independent Living Specialist

I tried to find articles on what it is like a year after disaster to write about, but in the end, every place has a different experience. I decided instead of sharing a stranger's account from another town far away, I would share my story for this newsletter.

Our family has been rebuilding this past year like so many families in our community. We were very fortunate to only have to work on our basement, and slowly one weekend at a time, we have gotten it back to a usable space again. A few weekends ago, I was moving things out of our attic and back into our family room downstairs. I looked out the window and something caught my eye. A single penny taped to the window.



My eyes filled with tears as the memory rushed back. I felt like the wind had been knocked out of me. It has been nearly one year since our house was filled with friends helping us move our belongings out of the house and my youngest daughter asked if she could leave her lucky penny in the upstairs room to protect our house. We told her it couldn't hurt! So, the final item to go up to the attic before we evacuated was her penny. We stayed at my parents for three months in a borrowed camper and when we were able to return safely we were relieved to have a place to come back to although we had three feet of sewage in our basement.

We have taken things one step at a time; thanks to some handy friends and a lot of sweat, things have come together. The time has flown by having so many projects to keep us busy. We kept repeating to ourselves, we are one of the lucky ones. We are all here and safe and able to fix things. I hadn't thought about that penny since we returned despite walking past it on several occasions.

The day I saw that penny, my emotions hit me fast. They were so close to the feelings I felt a year ago as we rushed to pack up our house amidst chaos. Even though I have been to so many trainings to help others deal with their loss, it took me by surprise to have them come over me, out of the blue, ten months later. I called a friend and chatted about what had just happened and it helped immensely. I let myself feel the emotions rather than ignoring them, but in the end I brought my feelings back into the present by reminding myself of all the things I have to be grateful for and look forward to.

Please know that if you have that moment where it all comes rushing back, you aren't alone! I found it helpful to talk to a friend. You may find another outlet is better for you such as finding a support group, exercise, seeking counsel with a spiritual advisor, or visiting with a counselor. Take time to do things you enjoy such as walking outside, gardening, playing softball, doing puzzles, reading, fishing, or even just enjoying a cup of coffee with a friend. You may be surprised to find how trying just a couple of these will make you feel better.



ND Constitutional Amendment Measure #2

Therese Besemann, Systems Change Specialist

Measure #2 is a controversial property tax amendment which will appear on the June 2012 statewide voting ballot as an initiated Constitutional Amendment. Measure #2 proposes to eliminate property taxes throughout the state of North Dakota by requiring the legislature to replace local governments' property tax funding with state revenue.

We sent letters to both the supporters at "Empower the Taxpayer" committee and to the opponents at "Keep It Local ND" requesting their point-of-view regarding Measure #2.

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“Constitutional Measure 2 is a seriously flawed proposal that will lock a radical idea into our state’s Constitution – an extreme measure that will take away local control and decision-making for more than 2,100 political subdivisions across North Dakota by eliminating property taxes. Measure 2 supporters believe that the state Legislature can best decide what local projects need funding, and that this, somehow, strengthens local control. Such claims are simply illogical. Eliminating property taxes might sound good, but it is anything but sound policy.

If passed, Measure 2 will fundamentally alter the relationship between communities and the state. Local governments will become dependent on receiving an allowance from the state Legislature in order to fund local services. The end result will be a one-size-fits-all-just-enough-for-basic-services funding approach for essential services such as police and fire protection funding. Non-essential services such as public libraries, public parks, snow removal, city street repairs will have to be sacrificed.

Keep It Local North Dakota is dedicated to preventing this from happening. Our coalition was founded to preserve and protect local control and decision-making. We are comprised of more than 80 groups, representing over 200,000 North Dakotans. Unlike Measure 2 supporters, our cause is not ideological and it’s far from radical. In fact, it’s quite simple: It’s about preserving local government.

There’s always a strong impulse to cut taxes. But we North Dakotans cannot afford to be impulsive when it comes to Measure 2. The stakes are simply too high.”

Chad Oban

Keep It Local North Dakota

Unfortunately, we did not receive a response from “Empower the Taxpayer” group. The following abridged information is from the “Empower the Taxpayer” book *Property Tax Revolution*.

“On June 12, 2012, the citizens of North Dakota will have an unprecedented opportunity. That’s the date of the primary, but our interest and intense focus right now is on a very special referendum also on the ballot. It’s called Constitutional Measure Number. If passed, property taxes will be completely abolished. What Measure 2 would do is to eliminate taxes on homes and buildings.

The benefits to abolition of property taxes, including the fact that it would allow the elderly to stay in their homes and not risk confiscation for the inability to pay. If real estate taxes are done away with, there will be economic growth in North Dakota, more young families will be able to buy homes, and more young people will stay in the state rather than seek employment in other parts of the country. In fact, some major corporations may choose to move their headquarters to our state because of all of the economic incentives to be found here.

But Measure 2 goes beyond just doing away with real estate taxes. It directs the legislature to come up with a formula to “fully and properly” fund all “legally-imposed obligations,” which includes state government services bankrolled by these taxes. If there is enough money left over, the legislators can then discuss discretionary spending and pet projects. Measure 2 requires the state to be fiscally-responsible. It cannot engage in funding that has not been approved unless there is revenue available. In other words, Measure 2 calls on the state government to become accountable and trustworthy stewards of taxpayer dollars.”

For additional information in support or opposition of Measure #2, see the Websites: Support at <http://empowerthetaxpayer.org> or for opposing information at <http://keepitlocalnd.com>. Whatever you decide, make sure you get out and vote!



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GET OUT & VOTE!

June 12, 2012

**Do you have questions about your polling place, accessibility or how to vote & when?
Please contact us at Independence, Inc.**

We can help.

Main Office: 300 3rd Avenue SW, Suite F • Minot, ND 58701

Office Hours: Mon – Fri, 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM

Phone : 701.839.4724 V/TTD • Fax: 701.838.1677

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