



PEOPLE'S VOICE

Inside This Issue

- Year In Review 1
- Year In Review con't 2
- Upcoming Events 2
- My Voice..... 3
- My Voice con't..... 4
- Year End Review..... 4
- Year End Review con't..... 5
- Consumer Corner..... 6
- US Fails to Ratify CRPD 7
- Lefse..... 7
- Introducing Jamie Hardt 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.

Year in Review

Scott Burlingame, Executive Director

One of the hardest questions that those of us at Independence, and in the Independent Living Movement have to answer, is "What is it you do?" We know that we are a disability rights organization and we all understand that our mission is to advocate for the freedom of choice for individuals with disabilities to live independently though the removal of all barriers. However, because removing those barriers can mean many different things to many different people, for this newsletter we decided it would be nice to share with you a recap of the outputs of the 2012 federal year.

Individual Services

Individual services at Independence Inc. include Individual Advocacy, Independent Living Skills Training, Information and Referral, and Peer Mentoring. For the year, we provided individual services to 363 consumers, and we responded to 1639 requests for information.

One of the individual services that we have been most proud of is our group independent living skills classes. In the past year, Independence provided 17 IL Skills classes. The topics covered included Voting, Cooking Classes, Homemade for the Holidays, Nutrition, Requesting Accommodations at Work, Baking 101, Basic Sewing, Budget Friendly Shopping, Fire Safety, and a few more. Each of these classes allowed participants not only to learn a new skill, but also to have a little fun while learning and engage socially with others.

Independence provided Youth Transition Services in the following schools: Rolette, Dunseith, Surrey, TGU, Minot High-Magic City Campus, Minot High-Central Campus and Bowbells for a total of 7 schools. This 17-week program started in 2011 to enhance full integration of students with disabilities into society through independent living skills training and character development. The program is tailored to meet the integration needs of each student with disabilities in light of their school's programs, population, and culture. Early outcomes indicate that students who participate in the youth transition program are

Continued on page 2...

more likely to talk to their friends, family and teachers about their disabilities and the impact of their disabling conditions. Ultimately, they are also more likely to participate in their own individualized plan for employment because they feel more confident in themselves to plan for life after high school.

We provided individual advocacy to 99 persons. This included helping people who felt they were discriminated against by employers or other agencies. We also assisted people to overcome bureaucratic barriers to receiving services that they need in order to maintain independence in the community. We also assisted people in recovering from the flood of 2011.

We assisted five people to return to the community after they had been living in the nursing home. This was done after spending hours providing outreach to all the nursing facilities in our service area attempting to locate people who wished to return home. We found ways to overcome the extreme housing shortage in our area as well as the shortage of employees to assist people once they returned home.

Types of Disabilities Served	# of Consumers
Cognitive	51%
Mental/Emotional	7%
Physical	26%
Hearing	.5%
Vision	2%
Multiple Disabilities	13%
Other	.5%

Ages of People Served	# of Consumers
Under 5	0
5-19	52%
20-24	5%
25-29	30%
60 & Older	13%

Upcoming Events

March 7 1:30 – 3:00 Health and Wellness IL

Guest Presenters from MSU. Come and explore what a healthy lifestyle means for you! Join us to learn about: emotional, social, physical, and spiritual health. We will also discuss health through meaningful activities.

April 9 1:00 – 1:45 Taking Care of You

This class is an opportunity to learn what you will need to succeed physically and emotionally in everyday life.

April 24 1:00 – 2:30 A Photo ID is Important!

First phase of a two-part class: This is your chance to prepare the information you will need to obtain your valid state identification card. Part Two of this class will be announced in our next newsletter.

Unless otherwise specified, all classes and events will be held at the office of Independence, Inc. Please contact our main office at [701.839.4724](tel:701.839.4724) for more information or to register for Independent Living classes. Hope to see you soon!

<p>Scott Burlingame, Executive Director Dee Tischer, Direct Services Coordinator Jill McDonald, Finance Director Connie Klein, Nursing Facility Transition Coordinator Pamala Mondragon, Information Specialist Dawn Olson, Independent Living Specialist Inez Rose, Nursing Facility Transition Coordinator Jamie Hardt, Youth Transition Specialist</p>	<p>ID Statement People’s Voice Published Quarterly January, April, July, October Independence, Inc. 300 3rd Ave. SW, Ste. F Minot, ND 58701</p>
--	---

My Voice

Scott Burlingame, Executive Director

Here are some numbers that should offend anybody who is an advocate of people with disabilities being part of the workforce. In the last 4 years, the number of Americans collecting federal disability insurance increased by 1,385,418 to a record 8,827,795 people receiving benefits. As a result, there is now one person collecting disability in this county for every 13 people working full-time. Forty-two years ago, in December 1968, there were 51 people working full-time in this country for each person collecting disability.



Everybody understands that many disabilities make competitive employment difficult, and everybody understands that some people will never be able to work at a competitive rate. However, we are 22 years post ADA, we have spent hundreds of millions of dollars on Vocational Rehabilitation, Special Education, supported employment, and education of employers and yet the numbers of people with disabilities in the workforce continue to be a national embarrassment.

This is a true cross-disability issue. People with mental health conditions, people with cognitive disabilities, people with physical disabilities, people with hearing loss, with vision loss and people with learning disabilities are all more likely to be unemployed than their non-disabled peers.

If you have been around the disability community as long as I have, you have seen people overcome some pretty significant disabilities in order to become economically self-sufficient. These people are often pretty humble folks, but many of them have a sense of perseverance that should be respected and emulated. I have long believed that the answer to changing the employment outcomes for people with disabilities can be found in looking into the success of these people and doing our best to copy those traits in others with significant disabilities.

We have to do a better job at helping people to find competitive, community based employment prior to going on benefits and we have to find ways to assist people in returning to work and getting off benefits once they are on them. The current system is broke and needs to change.

I am a firm believer that right now in North Dakota, we have an amazing opportunity to change the way people with disabilities are viewed in the workforce. With the workforce shortage our state has, now is the time to act aggressively to both employ more people, and create an environment in which less people are on government benefits.

During the current North Dakota Legislative session, there is some activity that will help to change the status quo and shake the system up. The first is SB 2271. This bill would amend the current Governors Committee on Employment of persons with disabilities (which has been defunct for many years) into a more modern and progressive group that will consist of 4 community members, and members who are part of various state government agencies. The goal of the committee is to remove barriers in reaching and identify how to further the goal of public and private employers considering competitive and integrated employment as the first option when supporting individuals with disabilities who are of working age to obtain employment.

Next is the funding for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR) within House Bill 1012 (N.D. Department of Human Services Appropriation Bill). In the Governor's budget, he included a hold-even budget for VR, as well as not including funding for a statewide network of benefits planners. As many of you know, about a year ago the North Dakota VR program entered into an order of selection, which is a fancy way of saying that they could not take on new consumers. In my role as the chair of the State Rehabilitation Council, I have been able to get a firsthand view of many

of the reforms that VR has undergone during this process, and they are now slowly being able to provide services to new consumers again. However, it is very important that the legislators meet the Governor's request for the hold-even budget (and the truth be told, some additional dollars would be appreciated as well).

Over the summer, due to various reasons, our statewide network of benefits planners ended. Benefits Planners are people who work with folks who are on SSI and SSDI to learn how to return to work at their pace without compromising their benefits (usually lifesaving health insurance). We went from having four people in North Dakota doing this, to one half-time staff member trying to cover the whole state. This is really a step backwards, and I think it would be nice to see additional funding added to the budget to cover a statewide network of benefits planners.

As always, Independence is looking for partners in advocating for the removal of barriers that are faced by individuals with disabilities. If you would like to voice your support for these bills, or if you would like to learn about any other legislation during this legislative session, give us a call at 701-839-4724 and we would love to help you.



Year End Review Community Services

Jill McDonald, Finance Director

Independence focused on eight issues for providing community based services in the 2012 fiscal year: emergency preparedness, community accessibility, assistive technology, education, employment, housing, transportation, and health care. Some of these issues were brought to light due to the flood of 2011. Each year, we review the feedback we receive from our satisfaction surveys to determine the focus for the upcoming year. The remainder of this article will highlight the outcomes of our focus on these areas.

Emergency Preparedness: More than 120 hours of staff time was spent on this issue area. We participated in accessibility surveys at all of the potential sites in Ward County for emergency shelters, served as part of the planning committee that developed the Ward County Emergency Shelter Plan and became part of the Ward County Emergency response plan. We had staff that served as Resource Agency Flood Team (RAFT) case managers and collaborated with other service providers and volunteer case managers.

Community Accessibility: More than 320 hours of staff time was dedicated to this issue. We provided newsletter articles on accessible recreation opportunities in the community. A Community Accessibility Support group was formed to assist people with disabilities in advocating for a more accessible community. We developed a quick reference Accessible Restroom Guide. Our staff did accessibility surveys at all the Ward County public parks and several other area buildings.

Assistive Technology: More than 20 hours of staff time was dedicated to this issue. We have a staff on the North Dakota Interagency Program for Assistive Technology Consumer Advisory Committee.

Education: More than 130 hours of staff time was dedicated to this issue. Independence, Inc. formed the Youth Ambassadors of Disability Awareness Group. We provided outreach to all the school districts within our service area and participated in community collaborations regarding community transition.

Employment: More than 100 hours of staff time was dedicated to this issue. Independence, Inc. cosponsored the ND Employment First Summit II, which over 80 people came together from around the state to learn about community based, and competitively paid employment. We participated in the ND Employment First Task Force that worked on drafting legislation for Employment First Legislation. Independence, Inc. also participated in the Jobs Boot Camp at Minot State University with 18 youth from our service area.

Housing: More than 200 hours of staff time was dedicated to this issue. Independence, Inc. staff partnered with two groups working to address homelessness in Ward County: The Minot Area Homeless Coalition and The Welcome Table. One staff also served as a Board member to the Housing Alliance of ND.

Transportation: More than 40 hours of staff time was dedicated to this issue area. We participated in a working group that is working to bring an updated transportation plan to the city of Minot as well as to the greater Minot area.

Health Care: More than 460 hours of staff time was dedicated to this issue area. We participated in the Money Follows the Person Stakeholders team. We provided quarterly outreach to all nursing facilities in our service area promoting our services. We also participated in many community collaborations throughout the year to ensure full community participation.

One of the many ways we are able to work on these focus areas is through our many community partnerships. In addition to our standard day to day jobs, our nine staff members each represent Independence, Inc. at different partnership meetings. The relationships and information gained from these meetings and partnerships are invaluable to all of us at Independence, Inc.

The following is a list of agencies and teams we collaborate with: Statewide Independent Living Council; State Rehabilitation Council, SMI Interagency Coalition; Employment First, Money Follows the Person Stakeholders, Interagency Meeting, North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities (NDCPD) Talk Walk, and Roll; NDCPD Consumer Advisory Council; Council on Consumer Advocacy; Disability Community Planning Group; MFP Housing Program; TRACC Coalition; Minot Senior Coalition, Minot Chamber of Commerce; Grant Writer's Round Table; IPAT Consumer Advisory Council; Williston Area Elderly Coalition; Minot Mayor's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities; and Committee on the Employment and Advancement of People with Disabilities (CEAD).

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, Jamie Hardt

Consumer Corner - A Profile In Voting

Scott Burlingame, Executive Director

This past November millions of Americans performed their civic duties and voted for the first time. At Independence, we spent a significant amount of time providing information to voters with disabilities about voting procedures, providing them with information about candidates, and most importantly encouraging them to get out and vote.

One place we provided training to was the transition class at Towner-Granville-Upham (TGU) School. At TGU we met Kimi Ofsthun, who is a participant in our youth transition program. Kimi was able to cast a ballot for the first time this November, and was proud to share her story with us.



The first time we met Kimi, she was extraordinarily excited to vote. She paid close attention to learning the requirements for voting and studied up on her polling location. She stated that she was particularly excited to vote for one office, and that she felt that the current holder was not up to the job.

On Election Day, Kimi went to vote at the courthouse in Towner. She stated that it was really, really easy, to vote, even though she had to wait in line for a while. She was glad that she had double checked her polling location, because she almost went to the wrong place. Kimi also explained that after attending our voter training, she used the Automark machine when voting.

Kimi said one thing that she will do before she votes again is study a little bit more about some of the down ticket races. She thinks it would have been nice to have known who was Republican and who was Democrat for all races (though in the end, she does admit to voting a split ticket).

On election night, Kimi chose not to stay up for the election results. However, she said her Mom read her the election results first thing the next morning. Even though the current office holder she had proudly voted against was in fact re-elected, her disappointment was lessened by the fact that she had made her own decision, and her voice (and her vote) was counted.

Nice work Kimi! Thank you for telling us your story, and we hope you vote many, many times in the future!

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.

Trip to the Capital

Independence, Inc. is looking at taking people who are interested in learning more about the legislative process to the capital this March. Please contact us if you would like to be part of this group by calling Scott at 701-839-4724.

United States Senate Fails to Ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities

Dawn Olson, Independent Living Specialist



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) has inspired nations around the world to reshape their laws to ensure and promote the rights and dignity of people with disabilities. Previously, the US has led the disability civil rights movement with its development of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other disability rights protections. However the US Senate has failed to support the CRPD, failing to pass a ratification vote. While attending a conference in Washington DC in December I had the opportunity to advocate for the passage of the CRPD. I visited Capitol Hill and visited with Senator Grassley's (Iowa) and Senator Hatch's (Utah) staff encouraging them to ask the Senators to vote for passage of the CRPD. A supermajority vote is needed for the CRPD to pass and unfortunately the vote did not pass by 6 votes (61 – 38). Because this is a disability rights issue, I encourage you to contact your US Senator encouraging their support of the CRPD using the contact information below.



Senator	Washington DC	Minot	Website
John Hoeven	(202) 224-2551	(701) 838-1361	www.hoeven.senate.gov
Heidi Heitkamp	(202) 224-2043	(701) 852-0703	www.heitkamp.senate.gov

Lefse

As prepared by Rod Gillund at Independence, Inc.'s Lefse Making Class

This recipe will make 50 rounds of lefse.

BOIL: 6 Cups water
1 Cup margarine (1/2 pound)
1/4 Cup sugar
1/8 Cup salt

Remove From Heat

ADD: 2 cups milk
1 Pound Potato Flakes
MIX WELL. Chill for 12 or more hours
(but not more than 24 hours)

ADD: 2 Cups flour just before rolling out the lefse.
FORM INTO BALLS: Keep well chilled.



Roll out as thin as possible on a floured, cloth covered board. Use a rolling pin sleeve. Lift with lefse stick. Bake on HOT lefse grille until brown spots are visible. Cover baked lefse with towel immediately after baking. Wrap in plastic when cool.



300 3rd Ave. SW, Ste. F
Minot, ND 58701
Phone: 701.839.4724 V/TTD • Fax: 701.838.1677
Toll Free: 1.800.377.5114 V/TTD
Email: independencecil@independencecil.org
www.independencecil.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

PRESORTED
STANDARD
US POSTAGE PAID
MINOT, ND
PERMIT NO. 523

Introducing Jamie Hardt

Jamie Hardt, Youth Transition Specialist



Hello! My name is Jamie Hardt and I am very excited to join the Independence, Inc. team as the new Youth Transition Specialist.

I moved to North Dakota two years ago from Attleboro, Massachusetts. After some cultural adjusting, I am happy to be living in the growing city of Minot, North Dakota and comfortably feel at home.

I earned my BFA degree in Art Education from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. During my practicum, I had the opportunity to teach art to students with intellectual disabilities. I instantly knew I wanted to continue working in the disability field after this wonderful experience.

Prior to joining Independence Inc., I worked at the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities at Minot State University on the Adult Student Transition Education Program (A-STEP) which provides transition and postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities. I am thrilled to be part of the Independence team and look forward to using my skills and creativity to help teach youth to make successful transitions into adulthood!