



# Center for Independent Living

Committed to providing a wide array of services that assist individuals with disabilities to live independently, pursue meaningful goals, and enjoy the same opportunities and choices as all persons.

Fairmont, Mankato, New Ulm and Waseca  
507-345-7139

[www.smilescil.org](http://www.smilescil.org) November/December 2017

## Volunteer of the Year:

**Liz Wachter.** The road to employment is often paved with volunteerism, but in Liz Wachter's case the road to volunteerism began with her job at SMILES Center for Independent Living. Beginning in 2002, Liz taught Independent Living Skills and quickly understood the value SMILES adds to our communities. Talented and energetic, Liz offers



crafting, cooking and scrapbooking classes to consumers and also volunteers in Assistive Technology's Annual Recycling events. This year Liz has added designing SMILES Kiwanis Holiday Lights tree to her volunteer resume. Volunteering at SMILES has become a family event - Liz's daughter and grandchildren are familiar faces at SMILES. Leading by example is the best way to instill volunteerism. Thank you Liz for your 15+ years of dedication to SMILES Center for Independent Living and people with disabilities and sharing your passion with your family and friends.

## Your Gift to SMILES

Your tax-deductible donations to SMILES support the independence of people with any and all types of disabilities. In 2017 donors like you helped:

- 3,488 individuals
- 83 individuals take part in **Peer Counseling** with 3,529 hours of service
- 362 individuals to receive **Independent Living Skills Training** totaling 10,123 hours
- 86 individuals served through **PCA Choice** with 81,642 hours
- 471 people participate in **Recreational Activities** resulting in 1,317 hours of service
- 572 persons use **Assistive Technology** totaling 1,071 service hours
- 148 high school students participate in **Transition Training** sessions with 2,505 training hours
- 1,650 requests for **Information & Referral** involved 818 service hours
- 67 individuals receive **Individual Advocacy** services with 804 service hours
- 3,356 hours of **Community Services**
- 49 **Ramps** were built using 808 service hours
- 149 **Volunteers** provide 4,297 service hours
- 2,053 **Consumer Goals** achieved

To donate go to [www.smilescil.org/donate](http://www.smilescil.org/donate) for secure credit card transactions. Or send a check to:  
**SMILES Center for Independent Living**  
709 South Front Street #7  
Mankato MN 56001

## Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA)

Under new regulations within WIOA, SMILES Center for Independent Living is facilitating informed choice and career counseling conversations with individuals working under a special wage certification. During these conversations, individuals will understand their employment options and methods to overcome barriers, career counseling opportunities, potential risks and benefits of their decision and resources. For more information contact SMILES at 507-345-7139.



## Assistive Technology

Are you aware that SMILES has a lending library of assistive technology that can help you decide which technology works best for you? Devices are loaned out for up to one month. SMILES offers assessments and then can suggest which devices might be appropriate. The Lending Library provides an opportunity to test drive the equipment prior to investing. Call Howard for more information at 507-345-7139 or [hrosten@smilescil.org](mailto:hrosten@smilescil.org).

## Start Seeing Pedestrians



What happens when neighbors, public safety, city officials and nonprofits discover common interests? Solutions to neighborhood problems are creatively discussed and action plans are put into place. SMILES has been working with residents of Durham Apartments, Gus Johnson Apartments, the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association, and others regarding sidewalk and pedestrian safety concerns. A group rallied around the issues on Friday, October 13<sup>th</sup> and brought the issue public with signs and wheelchair participation down Front Street and crossing Riverfront in Mankato. City Council member Trudy Kunkel and Free Press reporter Deanna Narveson were on hand to highlight our efforts as were Mankato law enforcement officers.



## Where There's a Will There's a Way...

- To support programs and people in need
- Build human capacity
- Encourage community engagement
- Develop and implement inclusion

Please consider including SMILES Center for Independent Living in your estate plans. Your thoughtful planning ensures programs that support people with disabilities in becoming as independent as they are able and provides them with the same choices and opportunities that all persons enjoy in their pursuit of meaningful goals. When you include nonprofit organizations in your estate plans your legacy lives on through the good work your estate plans fund. For more information: Contact Vickie at [vapel@smilescil.org](mailto:vapel@smilescil.org)

## Volunteer Opportunities



- Interested in learning how to build ramps? Perfect for a retiree. Steady summer work on a crew that builds metal modular and permanent wood ramps throughout Southern Minnesota. Training provided, hourly rate, mileage reimbursed. Work would begin next spring/summer. For more information contact Howard: [hrosten@smilescil.org](mailto:hrosten@smilescil.org)

## Transition to Community



Making the move from High School to work and/or college is not always easy, but SMILES Center for Independent Living offers programs that make that transition smoother for young people with disabilities. Classes are held in the school setting or local communities and consist of no fewer than 4 students designed or include groups of young people. SMILES **Transition to Community** program serves youth 14 to 22-years-old. "Hands on" practical skills training will assist in:

- Developing independent living skills
- Preparing students to take driver permit test
- Creating awareness of available resources and options for successful transitioning

For more information contact Lindsey:

[lmorrison@smilescil.org](mailto:lmorrison@smilescil.org)



## Headwaters Foundation for Social Justice

SMILES is excited to announce that it has been awarded a \$10,000 Community Innovation Grant from Headwaters Foundation in partnership with the Bush Foundation. This prestigious grant will support SMILES in its efforts to promote inclusive community engagement for people with disabilities.

Working under the SMILES Sidewalk Safety Campaign, individuals with disabilities are leading community awareness through radio ads, tv commercials, neighborhood walks, city council presentations and participation in neighborhood associations. Participating in local community leadership programs fosters inclusion, self-confidence, and belief in ability to lead.

Alyssa was the first SMILES Center for Independent Living recipient to attend the YWCA Leadership conference courtesy of the Headwaters Grant. In her own words, "It was amazing! I never would have had the chance to even know about this event. I learned so much and met so many great women."

Supporting women in developing leadership skills is important and should begin early in their lives. Providing the opportunities for mentorships and peer support increases confidence and belief in the ability to overcome barriers.

Especially important to Alyssa was hearing other women's struggles and how they overcame obstacles through humor and persistence. "Sesame (Dreamweaver speaker) spoke about mental health issues and how difficult that can make your life. I couldn't believe she had the courage to get up and talk about this in public. It was inspiring."

Thank you Headwaters Foundation for Justice.

## Traumatic Brain Injury Support Group

*Because you asked and because we care.* SMILES began hosting a Traumatic Brain Injury support Group in October. Robyn Block, a TBI warrior, facilitates the group which meets the second Wednesday of each month at SMILES Mankato office from 6 - 7:30pm. The group welcomes survivors, family, friends, and caregivers. As Robyn says, "It's a positive atmosphere to share ideas, coping skills and resources. For more information, contact Alex at 507.345.7139 or [alangsjoen@smilescil.org](mailto:alangsjoen@smilescil.org)."

## Winter Sidewalk Safety Awareness

It's that time of year when we gear up for winter - whether we like it or not. Days are getting shorter which means it is difficult to see pedestrians no matter how they walk. It also means that we all have a responsibility to keep our sidewalks and curb cuts free of snow and ice. Accumulating snow and ice create barriers for everyone in our communities. Sidewalks are the main transportation method for many of us and when a sidewalk cannot be accessed because of snow/ice mounds blocking curb cuts or unshoveled snow that makes walking/rolling impossible we all suffer. Sales fall at local businesses, isolation sets in among neighbors, and injuries create hardships. Shovel. Salt. Sand. Clear. It's the law!

