

THE

Independent

A Publication of Freedom Resource Center for Independent Living, Inc.

AUGUST 2017

FYI

Jamestown

Tie Dye in the Park & Picnic

Thursday, September 14, 2017

11:30am – 2:00pm

McElroy Park

Call Beth by September 12 to register at 701-252-4693 (free)

Wahpeton

Living Well 101: Independence

Tuesdays, October 3 – December 5, 2017

1:00 – 3:00pm

Freedom Resource Center

315 North 11th Street

Call Joyce at 701-672-1648 to register.

Registration limited (free)

Fargo

Living Well 103: Vocation

Tuesdays, September 5 – October 24, 2017

1:15 – 3:15pm

Freedom Resource Center

2701 9th Avenue South

Call Cindy at 701-478-0459 to register.

Registration limited (free)

Lisbon

Healthcare Directive (Five Wishes)

Monday, September 18th - 1:00pm

Freedom Resource Center

701 Main Ave, Lisbon

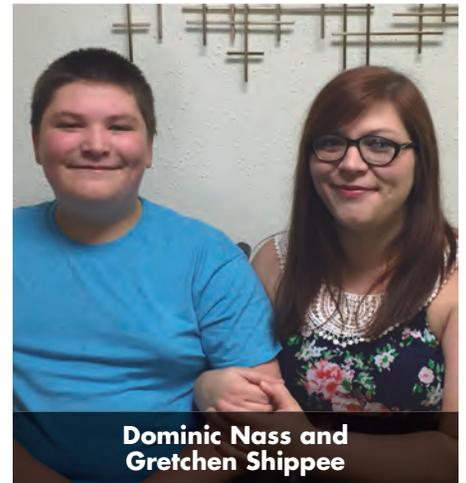
Contact Pam at 701-683-6850 to register. (free)

Back to School, the Hard Way

Dominic Nass is looking forward to school starting. He has lots of friends, and he loves the lunches. They taste like home cooking. He is very bright, and excels at math and science. Everything sounds great so far. Right?

It is surprising that Dominic, 13, likes school considering everything he's been through. Just getting through an entire school day is rough. He doesn't have the physical strength that other kids have. You see, Dominic has a form of muscular dystrophy. [Limb-girdle muscular dystrophies (LGMD) are a group of rare progressive genetic disorders that are characterized by wasting (atrophy) and weakness of the voluntary muscles of the hip and shoulder areas (limb-girdle area). Muscle weakness and atrophy are progressive and may spread to affect other muscles of the body. Many different subtypes have been identified based upon abnormal changes (mutations) of certain genes. (From WebMD)]

Dominic and his mom, Gretchen Shippee, have been fighting educational systems throughout his school life. He tried the Online Academy, but that was unsatisfactory. During the second



Dominic Nass and Gretchen Shippee

year they even sent him a computer that didn't work. Straightening that mess out took months. Plus, he missed being with his friends. The public school would not provide appropriate accommodations. They wanted him to attend eight hours a day. "I just couldn't. They didn't want to take the doctor's word for it either," Dominic said.

It got to the point where they needed to file a discrimination complaint with the State of Minnesota in order to get him what he needed. They started working

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with Tanya from the Freedom Fergus Falls office in February of 2017. She helped them along the process of figuring out how to get the accommodations they needed. Tanya said, "It seems like they were pushing things on mom that the school should do. It got better after we filed the complaint and the superintendent got wind of it."

They are hopeful this year will be much better. They want to make sure the school picks him up in an accessible bus this year. Last year Gretchen drove him the several miles to school every day. The only good part of that was all the wildlife they saw. His friends had been pushing him, and were not always very careful. Kids got run into, which Dominic definitely does not want. He's working on getting a power wheelchair. They are trying out one of Freedom's temporary ramps on their house.

Even though still relatively young, Dominic speaks of his disability in complex medical terms. He knows what it's all about, and also knows what he needs in order to accomplish what he wants to do. He loves science fiction, and reads a lot. He's into super heroes, and loves Harry Potter. He was excited to hear about the "Con" events that are held in Fargo. He tried playing baseball, but that didn't work out. He might try adaptive programs in the area.

He and his family have 13 pets, eight of the lizard variety. He helps with that whenever he can. Dominic, Gretchen, and his three younger siblings all live with her mother in Fergus Falls. Grandma helps with some personal care. Dominic jokes that it's good to be the oldest in the family. He said, "I get to boss them around, but they don't listen."

Gretchen is thankful for the referral to Freedom. She said, "I don't want to know what would have happened if Tanya and Freedom weren't involved this past year." Dominic summed it up: "It would've been problematic." Here's to a great school year!

From Where I Sit

The Independent Living program is under attack. On a nationwide conference call August 7, advocates from around the country spoke passionately about how Federal funding helps provide valuable services to people with disabilities and supports the work of Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILC.) The issue at hand is a proposal in the President's 2018 budget that would combine state grants for Independent Living, Developmental Disabilities, and Brain Injury services into one entity. Total funding would be \$47 million nationwide. That would be \$57 million less than the current funding for all three programs. It is being billed as innovation and efficiency, but the Independent Living advocates were not buying it.

So instead of answering the prearranged questions about how this program would work, the speakers talked about all that Independent Living does and why it is unique.

First, Independent Living has a unique set of services built around the concept of consumer control. It started as a self - help movement of people with severe disabilities trying to get into the mainstream of American life. The bedrock of Independent Living is advocacy – demanding equality in services, programs, and access to the community. It includes Independent Living skills training, so people can learn how to be independent in their homes and community. It involves information and referral for everyone; regarding disability programs, laws, and services. Peer mentoring is a key part of Independent Living. It is one person sharing their life experiences and listening to another, helping the person achieve their goals.

Second, Centers for Independent Living (CIL's) are unique in that the majority of the board of directors must



**Nate Aalgaard,
Executive Director**

have significant disabilities. A majority of the staff must have disabilities, so they can relate to those who come to the organization for services. This feature helps ensure that Centers are indeed independent entities, and not controlled by professionals or bureaucrats. People with disabilities know best what they need. They need to be able to take the risk involved in their decisions and live with the consequences. Independent Living is not about keeping people safe. It's about giving people an equal opportunity to make meaningful choices about how they live.

A few years ago, advocates worked to get the Independent Living program moved out of the Department of Education and into a new department called Administration for Community Living (ACL.) They felt this would better suit their priorities. Now, the very agency they were hopeful for has been charged with dismantling a significant portion of it. Statewide Independent Living councils oversee the program in each state. They grant funds to CIL's, and offer perspective on the needs of people with disabilities in underserved areas. Combining these programs would be a huge setback for the program that desperately needs to grow, not shrink.

Where Are They Now? by Chris Olson



A year has come and gone since last year's Art of Freedom event and some great things have happened since then! I just wanted to say how thankful I am and how great it was to take part in the event alongside with many other awesome local artists. It was really nice to talk with the other artists and guests about the art and the people behind the art. The event opened up my mind about my art and gave me a sense of potential in where I could take it. I never imagined that my photograph of the sunflower fields at sunset would be so popular. It was quite a shock actually!

The Art of Freedom event was the first of such events that I had taken part in and was honored to be part of it. My photograph since has been featured in a promotional commercial for Fox 9 in the Twin Cities. The commercial airs frequently, featuring the sunflower sunset photo that won 1st place by a popular vote in the 2016 Art of Freedom Event. I was given the opportunity to hold a solo exhibit of my photography

at the Otter Tail County Historical Society for a month long running in May-June. I also just recently won by popular vote in a photo contest put on by Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar.

I have been very blessed and honored to have such success with my work and every day brings me something new! That particular sunflower sunset photo and others from my collection are now hanging in the homes and business all around the states and just recently on the other side of the planet in Norway. The small town of Elbow Lake, Minnesota, from which I grew up, has a sister city in Norway, Flekkeford. The mayor of Elbow Lake, Deb Hengel, has gifted a canvas print of a collage of town scenes to the sister city in Norway. That is quite an honor for me to be given this opportunity to have my art in a foreign land!

I have added some fun new things to my art, which is all available for purchase. I offer metal or canvas prints, along with my own custom made frames made with reclaimed barn wood from all around the area. Currently, my art can be seen at Dakota Clinic of Chiropractic in Fargo (5670 38th Ave S Ste. B, Fargo, ND 58104), Prairie's Edge Dental in Fergus Falls (106 E Washington Ave Suite 2, Fergus Falls, MN 56537), Roasted Pub and Eatery in Detroit Lakes (815 Washington Ave, Detroit Lakes, MN 56501) and The Stevens County Historical Society & Museum in Morris, Minnesota (116 W 6th St, Morris, MN 56267.)

You can follow me on Facebook at www.facebook.com/chrisolsonprints or visit and purchase prints at www.chrisolsonprints.com.



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more independently over 25 years”*

Go to www.freedomrc.org
& click




5TH ANNUAL
Art of Freedom
Dakota Medical Foundation
4141 28th Ave. S. Fargo, ND
October 5, 2017 • 5:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Freedom Resource Center is proud to host the 5th Annual Art of Freedom. See original creations from new, emerging, and experienced artists.

Music, light refreshments, and demonstrations.

**For more information please call
800.450.0459
Free and open to the public.**

Proudly helping people with disabilities live more independently for over 25 years.

What's Wrong With This Picture?

This bathroom has possibilities of being accessible based on its size. As seen, it is not accessible. The grab bar behind the water closet is supposed to be at least 36 inches long. It should be mounted so that 24 inches extends from the center of the water closet to the open side of the water closet. The garbage can prevents a wheelchair user from backing next to the water closet for a side transfer. The cabinet under the sink prevents a wheelchair user from using the sink. The bottom of the mirror should be no more than 40 inches above the floor.

