

THE

# Independent

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

JUNE 2017

## FYI

Fargo

### Tie Dye in the Park

Thursday, June 22, 2017

1:30 – 3:00pm

Oak Grove Park

170 Maple Street, Fargo

Call Diane at 701-478-0459 to register (free)

Jamestown

### Patriot Wreath

Thursday, June 29, 2017

1:30 – 3:30pm

James River Senior Center

Call Beth at 701-252-4693

to register (free)

*Class size limited*

### Save the Date

#### 5th Annual Art of Freedom

October 5, 2017

Original creations from new, emerging, and experienced artists.

Music, light refreshments, and demonstrations

Dakota Medical Foundation

4141 28th Ave S. Fargo, ND

For more information call Freedom Resource Center at 800-450-0459.

## Making Progress

On February 4, 2016, Cindy Johnson's life blew up. That is the day she came home to find her husband dead on the floor -- suicide. The effects on her were devastating. She had to take a long time off from work and seek psychological counseling. In addition, her knee went out and she had to have surgery. This took about another month and a half to recover sufficiently to go back to work.

In July of 2016, Cindy, 57, was referred to Freedom Resource Center by someone at the Crisis Stabilization Unit in Fergus Falls. Her first thought was, "They can't help me." But that prediction proved to be wrong. Cindy began working with Marie, one of the Independent Living Advocates in the Fergus Falls office. Early on, Cindy encountered a very difficult problem. She had gastric bypass surgery in September, but then found out her insurance had lapsed the month before. She was facing an enormous medical bill on top of all the other stress that she had already gone through with her husband and knee surgery. Plus, her credit card bills were piling up.

Cindy and Marie began working through the financial problem and



Cindy Johnson

finally got that settled. During all this, Cindy had been neglecting to clean up her house and throw things away. They started working on reasonable goals, such as cleaning out her garage and having a rummage sale.

Cindy is originally from Moorhead. When she got married and moved to Fergus Falls, the only people she knew were her husband and his family. After her husband was gone, there were few people she could turn to for friendship other than her sister and mother back in Moorhead, and another sister in

**continued on page 2**

## What's Inside

» From Where I Sit

» 6th Annual Appreciation Lunch

» What's Wrong with this Picture?



www.freedomrc.org • 800-450-0459 • 701-478-0459

continued from page 1

Colorado. Cindy did not know what to do.

But things are getting better. Cindy appreciates having access to peer mentors; people who freely give their time to listen to other people with disabilities and help them accomplish their goals. Cindy said, "I have one peer mentor who goes to exercise with me once a week and another who does social things with me." Cindy is now back to work 2 to 3 days per week at the Pioneer Care Center and New Dimensions Home Care.

Recently Cindy did a couple of things that she probably didn't anticipate. One was going with a group of staff and others from Freedom to the Capitol in St. Paul on March 9. There, in individual meetings with area legislators, including Cindy's own representative, Bud Nornes; she told her story. She told them about where she had been emotionally when her husband died. She talked about her struggles, and the progress she has been able to make since then.

Then, on May 9, she spoke to a roomful of people at Freedom's Appreciation Luncheon. Neither one of these activities are probably something Cindy would have chosen to do, but she did them because she wanted to. And she does have something important to say.

But maybe Cindy decided to do this public speaking because she relishes new experiences. She said, "I love adventure. I ride motorcycle, went para-sailing and zip-lined over the Royal Gorge. I love to just go and see something new and not plan it out."

Cindy's goal is to retire at age 60. She owns a house in Fergus Falls, which she may eventually sell. She may then move to Colorado to live closer to her sister. But for now, she's just working on getting better every day. "I'm very grateful. Very thankful they (Freedom) can help in any way they can," she said.

## From Where I Sit

I still want my ADA!

Several years ago I wrote an article entitled: I Want My ADA. That was in reference to several Supreme Court decisions that weakened the protections that Congress had intended. It got to the point that almost no one was covered by the law. A woman was fired from an auto assembly plant because she could not handle the physical demands of the job. The reason the decision was upheld was that she could take care of her personal needs at home. She had clearly been discriminated against, but did not receive protection under the law.

Several other similar cases ended up at the Supreme Court with the same result. So in 2008, Congress and the President passed the ADA Amendments Act to reaffirm the intent of Congress that a broad section of the population be protected against discrimination based on disability.

So here we are, 27 years post - ADA signing and nine years after the Amendments Act and we still have pervasive problems. We have a sports arena where there are not enough wheelchair seating locations and many offer poor sight lines over standing spectators. We have a billion-plus dollar stadium that was opened with several deficiencies in accessibility. Many businesses don't even bother to install properly signed and marked accessible parking. Even things like lightening the pull weight on a restroom door are resisted.

I couldn't figure out why people who own and run buildings of all types and sizes think there is a "Grandfather clause" in the ADA. Not true. That refers to a building



**Nate Aalgaard,**  
Executive Director

code issue. Under the ADA, businesses have an ongoing obligation to remove barriers when it is readily achievable to do so. You can't just ignore them.

Anderson Cooper did a story for 60 Minutes on drive-by lawsuits. In my opinion it was biased and inaccurate. But then again, I'm biased – in favor of disability rights. The message was that unscrupulous attorneys were just driving around looking for even the slightest violations and then filing lawsuits on behalf of some unwitting person with a disability. They then extort money from the business in return for dropping the suit. The end result is a bad image for the ADA and people with disabilities: and worst of all, no increased access. Nothing gets fixed.

We want to give businesses the truth about their responsibilities to remove barriers. There are even tax incentives to do so. Why don't media-types like Cooper do stories about the benefits of being accessible; like more customers. We say 19 percent of the population has a disability. That's a lot of people, especially if you count the friends and family who go out to spend money with them. So call us. We're here to help you do the right thing.

# 6th Annual Appreciation Luncheon

Freedom Resource Center held its 6th Annual Appreciation Luncheon on May 9, 2017. Six award recipients were recognized: Volunteer of the Year: Laurel Haroldson; Peer Mentor of the Year: CeCe Manock; Advocate of the Year: Shelby Wolter; Accessibility Award: Scott Stenvold; Employer of the Year: Hornbacher's; and the Distinguished Service Award: Nancy Kunz and James River Senior Citizen, Inc.



Employer of the Year - Hornbacher's



Peer Mentor of the Year - CeCe Manock



James River Senior Citizen, Inc.  
Distinguished Service - Nancy Kunz



Accessibility - Scott Stenvold



Advocate of the Year - Shelby Wolter



Volunteer of the Year - Laurel Haroldson

The Appreciation Luncheon was made possible in part by the following **Platinum Sponsors:** Dakota Medical Foundation, BNG Holdings. **Gold Sponsors:** Marco, Consolidated Communications. **Silver Sponsors:** Bell State Bank, Blue Cross Blue Shield of ND, Brady Martz, NetCenter Supply, Knight Printing, Metro Area Mayors Committee for People with Disabilities, CARR-AGRA, Lisbon, ND, (Charlie & Ron Rotenberger) – Westwood Management, Wahpeton, ND, and (Bill & Kate Welder).

## Disclaimer

In an attempt to reduce the cost of mailings, please send your email address to [freedom@freedomrc.org](mailto:freedom@freedomrc.org). If you would like to be removed from our mailing list please call 1-800-450-0459. Freedom Resource Center and/or its Board of Directors do not necessarily endorse or support any of the views expressed within the personal testimonies contained in this newsletter, unless approval is specifically mentioned. Freedom Resource Center receives about 44 percent of its funding from the Federal Government. Approximate cost of this publication is \$.21 per piece, of which 44 percent or \$.09 is Federal funds; and 56 percent or \$.12 is non-Federal funds. Alternate formats available upon request.



NON PROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
FARGO, ND  
PERMIT NO. 1159

2701 9th Ave. S, Suite H  
Fargo, ND 58103

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

*“Helping people with disabilities live  
more independently over 25 years”*

Go to [www.freedomrc.org](http://www.freedomrc.org)  
& click



## What’s Wrong With This Picture?

An accessible sink must be usable by a person using a wheelchair. In this case the cabinet below the sink prohibits a wheelchair user from getting their legs below the sink. A less obvious problem is the height of the mirror. The bottom of a mirror should be no more than 40 inches above the floor. In this bathroom a wheelchair user could not see themselves. All they would see is a reflection of the ceiling.

