

the Independent

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

May 2014

Breaking Out of the Stereotypes



Kimberly Frye

Sometimes we need a little push from a trusted friend or family member to get our lives moving in the direction we always dreamed of. That push and encouragement can come when we least expect it or when we most need it. Other times we seek it out while yearning to improve ourselves. For Kimberly Frye, who has depression accompanied with physical disabilities, the push came from a friend when she was told to talk to Joyce at Freedom Resource Center. "My friend, Stacey, suggested I go to Freedom Resource Center to talk about my options. I was at the lowest of the low at the time and

I didn't know what to do. I was on Social Security and tired of being called lazy by people who simply didn't understand my situation. I don't have a visible disability so people just assume I didn't want to work." Kim remarked.

Kim, 51, was experiencing what many people with disabilities succumb to; stereotypes. Unfortunately there are times when stereotypes are so pervasive in our culture that we unknowingly project it onto others. For people with disabilities who are unemployed the stereotype can range from individual laziness to people suggesting the individual will be unproductive because of their disability.

"When I got to Freedom I met with Joyce and we talked about my options." Kim continued. "Joyce asked what my three-year goal is and really got me thinking. Joyce is so easy to talk to. She doesn't judge and she accepts you for who you are. That was exactly what I needed during that time."

"I was on Social Security and tired of being called lazy by people who simply didn't understand my situation."

Kim's first goal with Joyce was to work on a life skill. Her disability often prevented her from social settings and it was difficult to organize her goals. She was looking for guidance. "Her main goal at the time was to establish a singles group, because it was a life skill she wanted to achieve but she wasn't sure how to do it. I helped Kim in managing her goal. Her group that started with two individuals has now grown to over twenty members, Joyce said."

Overcoming employment barriers was the next goal Kim and Joyce worked toward. "When Kim first stopped in my office in October of 2013, she did not think she could keep a part time job let alone get a full time job." Joyce said. Kim was the manager of her apartment complex and worked part time at Walmart for seasonal employment. In March she was let go as the manager of the complex. However, that did not discourage her. "One day, during what I'll describe as a moment of clarity, Kim decided that she was going to go back to work and get off of Social Security." Joyce commented. "She was uncertain how she was going to do it so we went to JobService."

"During our time at JobService, I decided I wanted a job in an office or a secretarial type position. I wanted a career." said Kim. "Joyce offered volunteer hours at the Freedom Resource Center office in Wahpeton to get some experience." While Kim prepared for volunteer hours at Freedom, she also prepared her resume and sent it out to area businesses.

"I was extremely happy for Kim." Joyce remarked. "The day she came to volunteer, she was waiting for a call from Microsoft in Fargo about a job she had applied for. She got the call and she got the job!" Joyce said excitedly. Kim started her new role at Microsoft on April 21st. She was very happy with their willingness to reasonably accommodate for her to overcome her barriers.

Kim's story is the latest example of never giving up even when others seem to count you out and stereotype you. Perseverance through adversity is what makes us stronger and up for future challenges. It is important to note, we don't always take on these challenges alone. In Kim's case, a friend pointed her in a direction she thought was needed. Kim took over from there with a little guidance from Joyce. "Joyce lets you figure it out for yourself, but is there as guidance and someone to talk to. It was a very empowering experience at Freedom Resource Center." Kim said.

From Joyce and the rest of the staff at Freedom Resource Center, we look forward to seeing Kim's future success in her new career.



Microsoft in Fargo

What's

- New Youth Training on Disability
- From Where I Sit
- Thank You
- What's Wrong With This Picture?

INSIDE

Freedom Resource Center Introduces New Youth Training on Disability

A new opportunity is being offered for youth in the service area of Freedom Resource Center. Youth Disability Awareness is geared to introduce area youth to disability and disability-related topics to eliminate stigma, answer questions, and to correct common misconceptions of people with disabilities. Recently, the West Fargo Cub Scouts hosted Freedom's staff to learn more about disabilities.

Nearly 30 youth between first and fourth grade gathered in the gymnasium of a West Fargo elementary school to participate in the interactive and fun forty-five minute program. The room was buzzing with excitement and energy as the youth began to see the activities

they were about to undertake. Freedom Resource Center's Cindy Gabbert and Tyler Axness took to the floor and began a conversation with the youth.

"This program is created to be fast paced and engaging to help area youth understand that we are all very similar." Cindy commented. "The program is broken into four activities, disability etiquette, people first language, assistive technology demonstrations, and we are all alike. Each activity varies in tempo, but the underlying learning of acceptance is being taught throughout." She concluded.

Throughout the program, the Cub Scouts were engaged, attentive, and asked very good questions. Many related what they were experiencing and learning to classmates who had a form of disability and how that individual was treated.

"Approximately 19 percent of the population lives with some form of disability. Unfortunately, many of those individuals say they've felt isolated, secluded, and excluded from daily activities. Our goal is to ensure everyone living with or without a disability is included and treated equally." Tyler continued. "Introducing youth to disability is a vital piece in correcting this pattern."

The program is broken into the following activities:

- **Disability Etiquette**
 - o How do we interact with someone who has a disability?
- **People First Language**
 - o Putting people before their disability
- **How Assistive Technology helps people with daily tasks**
 - o Hands-on activity will allow youth the chance to test assistive technology devices
- **We are all Alike**
 - o A series of questions will bring the group together and realize we are all alike

If you are interested in hosting a youth disability awareness training, Freedom simply requests for the group to be limited to approximately 30 youth and for two to three volunteers to assist during activities. Contact our office at 800-450-0459 to learn more or to schedule your youth disability awareness training.

EYI

Garden Brickmaking

Where: Freedom
2701 9th Ave. S. Suite H, Fargo
When: May 22nd
Time: 1-3:30 pm
Call Diane at 701-478-0459

Window Tulips

Where: 125 West Lincoln Conference Room #3
Fergus Falls
When: May 27th
Time: 1 pm
Call Tanya at 218-998-1799

Window Tulips

Where: Washington Square Mall Suite 11
Detroit Lakes
When: May 29th
Time: 10 am
Call Tanya at 218-844-5880



West Fargo Cub Scouts learn about disability

From Where I Sit



Nate Aalgaard

We used to have one big banquet in the fall, which served many purposes. It was an inspirational event, which had a speaker and a program. It was sort of a fundraising event, because we sold raffle tickets. It was also an annual board meeting, which was probably of no interest to almost anyone. So we created a new event with a more specific purpose.

May 13 was the third annual Appreciation Luncheon, to honor our volunteers, community advocates, and businesses that help us in achieving our goal of assisting people with disabilities to live more independently. This event was created in order to pay particular attention to those who give of their own free time, without pay, to work for equality and inclusion for people with disabilities.

Their service could be in the area of helping us with projects in the office, being on a task force that goes out and provides disability awareness

or information to businesses on accessibility, or serving on our nonprofit board. It could be as simple as hiring somebody with a disability, or asking for our input on how to make their business more accessible. We also have many people who have been willing to share their experiences as a person with a disability with someone else – peer mentoring.

The Appreciation Luncheon is meant to be a celebration of Freedom. So many times we toil away day after day and don't lift our heads up from the task at hand to appreciate what we and others have been able to do. I find myself in that trap many times. I sit here in my office and I don't have to look far to find problems in the world that negatively affect people with disabilities. There are always bureaucratic issues to deal with here, because we get funding from a number of different grants, and there are a lot of rules attached to what we do. It can sometimes feel like a real grind to go to meetings, especially out-of-town in less than ideal weather.

I had the opportunity to appear on KFGO radio the other day. The host asked me how difficult it was for somebody like me to deal with the harsh winter we just endured. I told him that it was a real hassle, and I had never thought about moving so much in my entire life. I also told him that during the last legislative session there were times when I drove to Bismarck that I questioned why I was on those type of roads. But I told him that it was that important, because it was. I was out there working for additional funding so that we could expand our services to more people across the state of North

Dakota. We did receive more funding, and the result is our most recent office in Lisbon. So that's something to celebrate. We're making progress on our goal of a statewide network of Independent Living services.

Everyone who is associated with Freedom Resource Center is a winner. We have all overcome obstacles, or done things because we knew they were just plain the right thing to do. We are all together, working to make our society better and to open up opportunities for people with disabilities.

I would like to personally congratulate our retiring board members: Del Rae Williams, Ron Sandness, Susan Wedberg, Kathy Circle, and David Shove. We also have some outstanding award winners this year: Thank you all for your service.

Youth Advocate of the Year:

Logan Broad

Advocate of the Year:

Kris Wallman

Volunteer of the Year:

Sherry Bjornson

Employer of the Year:

Fargo Pizza Ranch-Dean Larson

Accessibility Award:

Dakota Medical Foundation



Disclaimer

In an attempt to reduce the cost of mailings, please send your email address to 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.

Funding for this publication was provided by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), Rehabilitation Services from the state's general fund, the State of North Dakota, and about 33% from the Federal Department of Education. However, the contents of this publication do not necessarily represent the policy of the funders and you should not assume endorsement by any government entity.

Alternate formats available upon request.

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

*“Equal Choice,
Equal Responsibility”*

Go to www.freedomrc.org
& click



Freedom Resource Center would like to thank the following sponsors and door prize donors for ensuring the 3rd Annual Appreciation Luncheon was a success. Without you, our event would not be possible.

Sponsors

- Aflac
- Great North Insurance Service
- Friendly Smiles Cosmetic Dentistry
- Brady, Martz & Associates
- Bell State Bank & Trust
- CARR-AGRA, Lisbon
- Westwood Management, Bill & Kate Welder
- Gate City Bank
- Marco
- Enventis
- Network and Technology Solutions
- Knight Printing
- NetCenter Supply
- Advantage Credit Bureau
- Ramada Plaza & Suites
- *Dakota Medical Foundation
- *High Point Networks

Door Prizes

- Papa Murphy's
- Green Mill
- Happy Joe's
- West Acres
- Chili's
- Noodles & Company
- Scheels
- Godfathers
- Lucky's 13 Pub

*Premium Sponsors

What's Wrong With This Picture?



The water jugs are obstructing a person's leg room below the counter. Individuals who utilize a wheelchair may have a difficult time accessing the counter space.