

Northern Highlights

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Center For Independent Living of NE MN
Winter 2007

Nationwide Bus Tour to Raise Disability Awareness Made a Stop in Superior, WI

Jim Ward presenting in Superior, WI photo by Greg Mielke



The Road to Freedom Tour, made a stop in Superior, WI on August 15, 2007 to discuss the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Restoration and state efforts surrounding the ADA. The bus tour helped to inform and inspire America about the compelling history of disability rights and what remains to be accomplished to fulfill the promise of the ADA.

Representative Boyle and other local leaders made a short presentation on the ADA. Also, Jim Ward, Founder and President of *ADA Watch and the National Coalition for Disability Rights (NCDR)* based in Washington, DC, made a short presentation.

The landmark ADA passed with overwhelmingly bi-partisan support in Congress over 17 years ago. It was created to ensure that people with disabilities could access the same services as people without disabilities. For the most part, the ADA has been a success, resulting in greater community integration of people with disabilities and further protections against unlawful discrimination.

With all of its successes, court decisions have also resulted in stripping many of the protections Congress intended the ADA to provide. Barriers to equal access to places of business and public services also remain more than 17 years after passage of the ADA. The Road to Freedom tour was attempting to alert Americans to these problems and alert them to the need for Congress to pass ADA Restoration, effectively returning the protections that have been eroded over the years.

For more information about the Road to Freedom Tour, visit: www.roadtofreedom.org.

Volunteering can Enhance your Professional Life

- Volunteering provides incredible networking opportunities.
- Volunteering helps you retain or sharpen skills you may not be using in your current job.
- Volunteering is a perfect way to learn new skills in a non-threatening environment.
- Volunteering can help you explore new career options.
- Volunteering gives you the satisfaction that you, too, are making a difference and are involved in the community.
- Volunteering gives you visibility and can expose you to influential people in the community.
- Volunteering can be energizing.
- Volunteering can help you create greater leadership skills.
- Volunteering allows you to demonstrate skills beyond your job — experiences you can list on a resume.



Coffee and Crafts Group

Hi, my name is Roberta Middlestead, I will be holding the Coffee and Crafts Group at the Center for Independent Living in our new location 2104 6th Avenue East in Hibbing from 6:00 to 7:30PM. My goal is to make it as fun and exciting as possible for all who attend, so I am open to any ideas that you may have. Please feel free to call me or you can state your ideas during class. I will keep this class pretty small and only by RSVP, but will be expanding once I have a few classes under my belt, because I would like for everyone who wants to attend to be able to. When you receive my invitation make sure to call for a spot as soon as possible! Thank you to all who have attended our Coffee and Crafts Group in the past and those who will attend in the months to come. If you have staff that work with you, make sure you bring them to assist you.

Call Roberta at (218) 262-6675 OR 1-800-390-3681.

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!

Friends helping Friends: Senior Program Makes Visible Differences in Lives of Others

A senior companion is someone that lends a listening ear or a ride in their car.

“What a senior companion does is give people a shoulder to lean on, and that is what friends do for friends.” said Bob Houg, a senior companion that volunteers in the Hibbing area.

Houg lends his time, a total of 10 to 12 hours per week, to visit six homebound seniors and assist them with grocery shopping, appointments and other daily tasks.

He said the needs of his clients vary. One individual has cancer and a number of other disabilities. Houg said this client appreciates someone that will give him time and take him out of the house to visit with people. Other clients are more mobile, but are in need of someone that can give them a ride to places as they can no longer drive.

Many senior companions like Houg are making a difference across the Iron Range. Senior companions are adults, 60 years of age and older, who help others live independent lives by being a friend. The Senior Companion program is a government funded program established over 30 years ago for lower income seniors so they could volunteer their time and receive a small tax-free stipend for their service, according to the Lutheran Services website.

“The main goal is to keep people living at home for as long as possible in as dignified a manner as possible.” said Peg Kirsch Lee, senior companion program supervisor. “It keeps them independent and satisfied with their circumstances.”

According to Kirsch Lee, senior companions also provide support to caregivers so they can continue to provide care to a loved one. She said to receive a stipend senior companions must commit 15 hours or more per week. They also are offered mileage reimbursement. She said many companions set up

a schedule to meet with several seniors throughout the week. That schedule is arranged between the senior companion and the client.

Kirsch Lee describes the program as a “win, win” situation as senior companions get as much out of participating as their clients.

“It tends to be a really wonderful relationship,” said Kirsch Lee. “Most of the time people are senior companions for a long time because it is satisfying to them and they can make a visible difference in the lives of their companions.”

Houg, 78, started volunteering with the Senior Companion Program last August because he felt he needed to get out of the house. He agrees the program is reciprocal in terms of benefiting both himself and the client.

“I certainly urge those that want some positive feelings about their life to try it because it makes a person feel worthwhile because they are giving so much to people who need so much.” said Houg

He said he’ll be a senior companion until he can’t physically do the job anymore.

“I think it is a really tangible way for people to make a difference in the life of another and feel like they can enrich someone’s life and feel good about what they are doing for someone else.” said Kirsch Lee. She said they are currently in need of senior companions in Virginia and Hibbing.

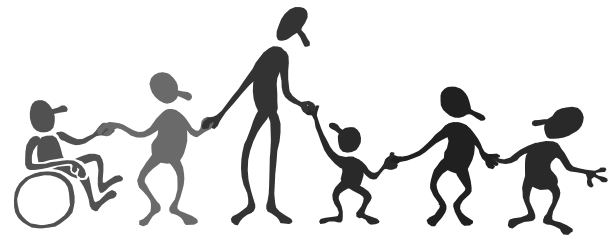
To become a senior companion, seniors must fill out an application and complete a background check and motor vehicle check.

**To learn more call Kirsch Lee at 218-724-0648
or Anita Beckman at 218-262-6675
or visit lssmn.org/senior-corps**

(Taken from Hibbing Daily News on May 10, 2007)

In The Spirit of Making Connections ...

Soon after receiving the “Spirit of Community Award,” members of the Aitkin County Homeless Coalition were making final plans for another event that shows the type of community spirit that got them recognized by Lakes and Pines Community Action Council. The second annual Operation Community Connect was held at the First Lutheran Church in Aitkin on Oct. 11.



Getting In The Spirit

“Dedicated to helping communities and families through commitment to service and advocacy,” is the way the awarding agency described the Aitkin coalition.

The Spirit of Community Award is presented annually to an individual or group (not in formal partnership with the agency) whose work mirrors the mission of Lakes and Pines.

“The recipient must display outstanding contributions through commitment to service or to advocacy for the lower income residents. [The recipient] must display positive leadership, creativity, dedication and compassion”, Lakes and Pines representatives state.

About this year’s award recipient, they say, “Under the leadership of Jessica Seibert, the Aitkin County Homeless Coalition has made significant contributions to educate the community about the presence and needs of homeless people not only in Aitkin but in East Central Minnesota as well ... Aitkin County Homeless Coalition continually showcases the example of successful community-based efforts to impact anti-poverty strategies. This volunteer group is dedicated to helping communities and families help themselves and improve the quality of life within the local communities. They have tremendous impact on personal lives, in influencing public policy and in educating community leaders and public officials.” Seibert called the award, “a nice honor.”

“All the volunteers and everyone on the board has a heart for people who are homeless or living in poverty,” she added.

Making Connections

Since starting almost by accident three years ago, the coalition has organized three events - Poverty Study Circles, Ruby Payne’s “Framework for Understanding Poverty” and Operation Community Connect. The first two events focused on educating the public about the problems of poverty and homelessness in the area and the third was so successful at doing something about those problems that the group decided to make it an annual event.

Representatives of local agencies concerned with homelessness met for the first time three years ago to answer a request from the Wilder Foundation and get an accurate survey of the number of homeless in the area.

“We decided that we liked getting together and that we should keep in touch with each other and make it our mission to educate the community on the issues of poverty and homelessness,” Seibert said. Last year, 161 families were served during the one day event and 26 homeless people filled out the Wilder Survey. But that was just one part of the day-long event. Twenty-five different service agencies were represented including area public schools and senior organizations. Volunteers were on hand to register participants, provide free daycare and a free lunch, courtesy of the Salvation Army.

(Continued on page 5)

In The Spirit of Making Connections ... (Continued)

This year’s participants will include: Advocates Against Domestic Abuse, Access North, Aitkin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Aitkin Workforce Center, Lakes and Pines CAC, Lutheran Social Services, the Ministerial Association, Rural Development, the Salvation Army and University of Minnesota Nutrition Education.

Those groups and more are expected this year for the event that ran from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. with lunch served from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. There was a food shelf, Coats for Kids distribution, distribution of gas, grocery and phone cards and distribution of mittens made by the tenants of Maryhill Manor and of quilts sewn by members of the First Lutheran Church’s quilting club. Free rides to the event were also provided upon request.

”People who came last year thought the event was very beneficial ... Anything we could think of that someone dealing with homelessness or poverty might need will be there that day,” Seibert said. “The main goal of Operation Community Connect is to connect people to services that they may be unaware of or unable to obtain due to lack of transportation or other extenuating circumstances.”

Anyone wanting additional information should call Seibert at: 218-927-2151.

Pacer Puppets

Thanks to funding from the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation and the Hibbing Foundation, CILNM will be purchasing PACER Puppets in order to provide Disability Awareness Training to children in preschool through grade 4.

PACER Puppets are about three feet tall and represent various racial and ethnic groups. Each puppet has a disability. For example, one puppet (Sally) has Cerebral Palsy and uses a wheelchair. Another puppet (Gina) is blind. The puppet shows are designed to help children learn about different disabilities.

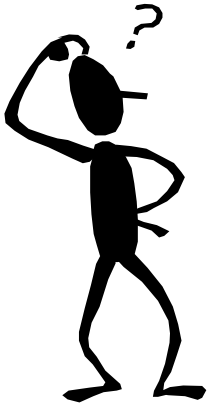
The puppets also help eliminate fears, stereotypes and misconceptions about people with disabilities. The shows promote a message of understanding, tolerance and inclusion. We are very excited to begin providing PACER Puppet Shows to area schools.

If you would like more information or would like to schedule a show, please contact Pam in the Hibbing office or Roberta in the Duluth office.



Introducing A New Member To Our CILNM Team

Hello, my name is **Connie Morehouse** and I am a new IL Specialist in the Duluth office. I have worked for an Independent Living Center in St. Cloud for the past two years. Previously, I worked as a children’s mental health Social Worker and a youth advocate in the school system. I grew up in the Duluth area and my family and I are happy to be back. I am very excited to be working in the Duluth office and look forward to being part of the Access North team.



What Happens Next? Booklet on Early Stage Dementia

About 4.5 million people in the United States have Alzheimer's disease, and almost half of them — nearly 2.2 million people — are in the early stages of the disease. In the years to come, these numbers are expected to grow. One reason is that as Americans live longer, more of us will develop dementia in our older years. Another reason is that new knowledge and techniques are helping doctors detect signs of the disease earlier than ever before. An earlier diagnosis gives people with the disease and their families more time to get the right treatment and to plan for the future.

More and more resources are available to help people with early-stage dementia cope with their feelings and the practical aspects of everyday life. Early-stage support groups are one of these resources. Joining an early-stage support group can help you and your family learn about the disease and get useful advice about living with dementia. A support group also can connect you with others in similar situations and enable you to confront the anxiety, sadness, anger, or fear that you might be experiencing.

This booklet was developed by the early-stage support group at the Northwestern University Alzheimer's Disease Center in Chicago.

The authors chose to share their thoughts and feelings because they wanted to help others who also are facing the beginning stages of dementia. Here, you'll find firsthand views about a diagnosis, what to expect, how to talk with others about the disease, and more. You'll also find a list of helpful organizations that offer written materials about dementia, information about support groups and services, and ways to get involved in research that may help others in the future.

Our goal in publishing this booklet is to offer encouragement to those who have been diagnosed with early-stage dementia and to let you know that you are not alone. We also hope to help empower you to stay active in your care and decision making, just as the support group members quoted here have done. Finally, we encourage you to try to keep a positive outlook and to stay engaged in family and social activities, hobbies and pastimes, and creative interests that you can continue to enjoy. In doing so, you can take an active role in making the years ahead as rich and fulfilling as possible, despite the challenges.

**To find more information about
this please visit:**

**[http://www.nia.nih.gov/Alzheimers/
Publications/WhatHappensNext.htm](http://www.nia.nih.gov/Alzheimers/Publications/WhatHappensNext.htm)**

For a list of activities and groups
in your area, contact your local
CILNM Office

Range Area Groups:

Multiple Sclerosis Support Group
Functional Fitness for Older Adults
Coffee & Crafts Group
Fibromyalgia and Chronic Pain Support Group
Vision Loss Support Group

Duluth Area Groups:

'For Women Only'

TBI Group

Vision Loss Support Group

*The Duluth Office offers ongoing DTA bus training

*We also have an accessible computer lab for consumer use

*The new Assistive Technology Demonstration Lab/Lending
Library is up and running for people to come and view or
borrow devices.

Aitkin Area Groups:

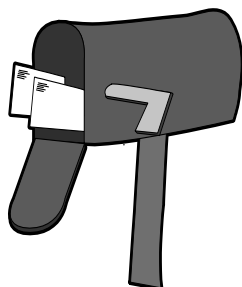
"Do You Have A Plan?"

MS Support Group

FYI! for College Students with Disabilities- Meets
monthly at Lake Superior College, call Erin at
(218) 625-1400 for more details.

**Duluth Winter Skills Groups/Classes starting in
January! Call (218) 625-1400 for details.**

If you have any needs and/or
ideas for a support group, please
contact the CILNM Office closest
to you and ask them for
assistance in setting them up!



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OUR MISSION:

To assist individuals with disabilities to live independently, pursue meaningful goals, and have the same opportunities and choices as all persons.

Serving people with disabilities in the Minnesota counties of

- | | |
|-------------|-----------|
| St. Louis | Aitkin |
| Lake | Carlton |
| Cook | Pine |
| Koochiching | Cass |
| Itasca | Crow Wing |

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