

NORTH COUNTRY NEWS

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North Country Independent Living

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Celebrate Abilities - North Country 20th Anniversary Picnic

On July 25th, North Country hosted a picnic at the UWS Track and Field Complex in recognition of our 20th Anniversary. The event was well attended with over 100 people who joined us for food, fun, and reminiscing. There were games for the kids, kite flying, and Courage Duluth had hand cycles and other adaptive equipment for try-out that were very popular with the kids and adults alike. Awards were given out to various people who have been instrumental in North Country's mission and the disability movement in general. Those honored included Rep. Gary Sherman, Sen. Bob Jauch, Ventures Unlimited, Catholic Charities Bureau, Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board, Ashland County Aging Unit, Gale Geisler, Mark Novotny, Tom Horst, and Courage Duluth. As part of the event, the UWS Outdoors program made their High Ropes Course available and there was a steady line of people waiting to try the zip line. In all over 30 people overcame their fear and braved the zip line for a thrilling ride! A big thank you goes out to the UWS Outdoors program, Courage Duluth and all our sponsors for helping make this a successful event.



Your help is appreciated...

Please help us...

In order to reduce costs of mailings, please consider receiving your newsletter by email. Contact Cheryl at North Country by email: ncilcheryl@superior-nfp.org or call 800-924-1220 V/TTY.

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ADA RESTORATION: ONE STEP CLOSER!

On June 18th, the House Judiciary Committee unanimously passed HR 3195, the ADA Restoration Act (ADARA). After it passed, Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI), co-sponsor of this resolution, made the following statement: *(Excerpts from his statement)*

“One of our finest moments occurred eighteen years ago when President George H.W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act into law. It was with that stroke of a pen that this country took a significant step forward in eliminating the barriers that for far too long kept disabled Americans from fully participating in the American dream.

Prior to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Americans with disabilities faced not only physical barriers in almost all aspects of society, but also attitudinal barriers, which relegated them to a form of second class citizenship. Moreover, because federal and state laws were ill-equipped to protect disabled Americans at the time, the false stereotypes and discriminatory treatment employed by others created a vicious cycle.

The ADARA was originally drafted as a response to a number of Supreme Court cases that chipped away at the broad protections of the ADA. The impact of these Supreme Court decisions has been to exclude millions of disabled workers from the ADA’s protections and requirements for employers.

The courts have created a situation in which disabled Americans can now be discriminated against by their employers because of their impairments, but these citizens are not considered disabled enough by our federal courts to invoke the protections of the ADA.

This is unacceptable. No other civil rights law, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, requires a victim of discrimination to first prove that she or he is worthy of the law’s protections before proving a discrimination case. Nor should the ADA require such proof. The ADA is a civil rights law and should be interpreted as such.”

You can find more information on the provisions and current status of HR 3195, the ADA Restoration Act at www.thomas.gov.

St. Scholastica offers Occupational Therapy

For people who need Occupational Therapy, but have little or no insurance, St. Scholastica may be able to help. They are offering adult OT clinics again this fall beginning September 22 and running through the first week of December. The sessions are for one hour on either Monday or Wednesday for 10 sessions.

Occupational Therapy helps people relearn skills of daily living. Consumers with stroke, brain injury, spinal cord injury, MS or Parkinson’s disease or other disabilities often receive OT services. For more information, contact Julie at 218-723-5967.

NEW PROGRAM

NCIL PERSONAL CARE PROGRAM

North Country Independent Living's Personal Care Program serves individuals of all ages and all disabilities. Our goal is to allow the individual to have a choice in how his or her services are provided. At North Country Independent Living, we believe:

- Persons needing assistance in their homes should have the freedom and opportunity to control their lives, manage their own affairs and live as they choose in the community.
- Persons utilizing our services should take an active role in the planning, implementation and evaluation of our services.
- Every consumer should be satisfied and comfortable with the services he or she receives.

North Country Independent Living Personal Care Program will serve consumers in Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas and Sawyer Counties. We provide two types of services: Personal Care and Supportive Home Care.

Funding Sources

North Country Independent Living accepts many funding sources, including Medical Assistance, County funding and Private pay.

Personal Care Services

Personal Care Services include any type of "hands on" care. These include, but are not limited to:

Assistance with bathing, dressing and undressing, teeth, dentures and mouth care, simple exercises, skin care, medication reminders, toileting, assistance with incontinence program, transfers and mobility – includes use of walker and Hoyer lift.

Supportive Home Care Services

Supportive Home Care Services include duties that are not considered "hands on" care. These include, but are not limited to:

Light housekeeping, meal preparation, companionship, laundry, linen changing, grocery shopping and other errands, safety, security checks.

Our Mission

Empowering People with Disabilities

To learn more about North Country Independent Living Personal Care Program please call Gloria at 715-392-9118 or 1-800-924-1220

Home Improvement Grants Available

The Realtor's Association of Northwestern Wisconsin has a small amount of funding available to improve accessibility to homes. These grants are for \$2,000. Many of the counties in North Country's service area are covered by these grants. A county employee or a member of the clergy can apply for these grants on behalf of a consumer. To find out more or to get an application, contact:

Realtors Association of Northwestern Wisconsin Foundation

1903 Keith Street, Eau Claire, WI 54701

Ph 715-835-0923

This foundation has already assisted North Country consumers in making their homes more accessible. We thank them for that. Applications are due August 30, 2008.

Where Did the Time Go?

Stewart Holman

It's been a fast 20 years. That much I know. I have had the privilege of being at North Country from its beginning in 1988 when our first board of directors was formed.

North Country now serves eight counties, including Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Price, Sawyer, and Washburn. We also serve Bad River, Lac Courte Oreilles, Red Cliff and St Croix reservations.

Our mission has always been to empower people with disabilities, to take charge of their lives and live as independently as they are able.

I was hired at North Country in 1993 as a Transition Specialist, along with two other staff to primarily work with young adults with disabilities, helping them make a transition from high school to the community.

Other changes that have happened at North Country during our first 20 years:

- Adding a benefit specialist to help consumers continue work and maintain their benefits
- Adding a Transportation Coordinator
- Adding services to assist consumers to transition from nursing homes to the community
- Facilitating a variety of support groups in our service area
- Adding our Disability Navigator Program to assist consumers to locate resources for employment

(Continued on page 6)

Director's Corner

John Nousaine

Wow! Our 20th summer is marked by huge changes. We part ways with two wonderful staff. Assistant Director Dee Truhn is moving on work at Access to Independence in Madison. Dee has been with us for over fourteen years, starting out managing our fledgling transition program and then taking over operation of all program services. Her trademark strengths of IL accountability and advocacy are embedded in North Country and we will miss her greatly. As for North Country, Dee's contribution will remain with us always as she is indelibly etched in our souls. As for the IL community in Madison, congratulations, you're getting a premier advocate. As for Dee, you go girl!

We also say adios to our accountant of 11 years, Nickoel Anderson. Nickoel came to us fresh from UWS with a degree in accounting as our bookkeeper. When she left for a great opportunity with a local college she was a CPA with loads of experience, a great reputation, a history of clean audits. The system she developed is keeping us on an even keel in our transition, although, we especially miss the afternoon visits from her two boys who attended daycare in our building.

Our building plan is changing as well. As our landlord UWS expands their health service, our present reception area will be annexed by that department. So our new reception area will be across the hall. My office and Gail's office will move down the hall and our Assistive Technology loan closet and conference room will now be on the 3rd floor. In particular we're really looking forward the new and improved loan closet as we'll have more space.

Why not add on an expanding MA Personal Care Program to top it all off! Gloria's article in this newsletter will detail our major program expansion.

The only thing constant in life is change. The thing to do is embrace it with gusto!

Help to get on the Internet Still Available

North Country Independent Living has limited funds to assist people with disabilities get connected to the Internet. This funding is being provided by the Universal Service Fund. Up to \$200 in startup costs for initial access to the Internet can be covered. As part of this program, North Country can provide training in how to access the Internet.

The Universal Service Fund also provides vouchers to pay for amplified phones or personal listening devices such as a pocket talker. These vouchers are available through the Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP). North Country can help you apply for these vouchers. Sometimes, these vouchers require a co-pay by the consumer. North Country has funding available from the Universal Service Fund to help pay these costs. If you would like to find out more about help getting connected to the Internet or qualifying for a TEPP voucher, contact North Country in either Superior or Ashland.

Telework Loan Success

“Telework has brought me to the point where I feel useful and confident again.” That’s the feeling of Richard Jaeckel of Cable who now has his own business up and running with the help of a Telework Loan.

Richard handles calls from his home for a catalogue company. He takes orders for the company and can also check on orders for customers. He says he is getting busier each day, and the low interest loan he got through Telework helped him purchase the laptop computer and printer and other things he needed to get started.

Telework is a low interest loan program (6.5 %) for people with disabilities who need office equipment such as desks or chairs, fax machines, printers or other things to work from home or other remote location. North Country can assist with the paperwork at no charge. Telework is like any other loan application where the applicant must show they can repay the loan.

Often North Country collaborates with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, UW-Stout or other agencies to give a consumer a chance to succeed at their new business. This is what happened in Richard’s situation.

Richard is a person with diabetes and seizure disorder. He says the Telework loan has made it possible for him to start a new business and to begin feeling a bigger part of his family. He likes being able to have more income and paying off some debt.

If you would like to find out more about Telework or the WisLoan program, contact North Country in Superior or Ashland.

Where Did the Time Go? (Continued from page 4)

- Adding personal care services

These are only a few of the improvements I have seen at North Country in the last 20 years. We plan many more in the future.

I hope that you will continue to consider contacting North Country if you are a person with a disability and need some help taking charge of your life. We are here to help you become empowered.

TELEWORK The Wisconsin Telework Program is a statewide, alternative loan program that allows Wisconsin residents with disabilities to purchase computers and other equipment needed to work from home or from other remote sites away from the office, such as work on the road or at a Telework Center.

Telework is made possible through a grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The Department of Workforce Development and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation received the grant and provide program and fiscal oversight.

North Country's Transportation Voucher Program is Full

The good news is that interest in our transportation voucher program has been tremendous. The bad news is that due to the tremendous interest, we are no longer able to sign up new participants. We have started a waiting list for those who are interested in signing up. But we cannot promise they will receive funding to travel this year.

During the first four months of North Country's 2008 transportation voucher program, people with disabilities from our eight Northwest Wisconsin counties have traveled nearly 16,000 miles.

Where are voucher program participants traveling? Like the rest of us, they're going to work, social events, shopping and medical appointments. Shopping trips top the list followed closely by trips to medical appointments. Travel for social and religious activities is a close third followed by trips to work.

All this travel is made possible by the initiative of program participants who arrange for rides, and by the generosity of dozens of friends, neighbors and family members who devote their time and their vehicles for the travel needs of their fellow community members.

The North Country Travel Voucher Program is supported with funding provided by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's New Freedom Initiative. Many thanks to all our participants and drivers. North Country expects to apply for funding for the transportation voucher program again next year.



Bob (right) visiting with Linda, one of NCIL's consumers at the picnic.

Jim at the North Country 20th Anniversary Picnic.



New Staff at North Country

Jim Glaeser is North Country's new bookkeeper/accountant. Jim comes to North Country with many years of experience assisting non-profits. Jim has been finance director of the Northwest Wisconsin Community Services Agency and finance director of the Duluth Community Action Program. He has also done accounting for the Northern Communities Land Trust, the Damiano Center, the Housing Access Program and many others.

Jim lives in Poplar with his wife, Leanne. Jim and Leanne's first grandson (Hunter James) just celebrated his first birthday.

Jim likes to fish, hunt, keep up with the Packers and spend time at his Butternut Lake property. Welcome, Jim.

Grassroots Advocacy Network

North Country Independent Living currently has over 100 consumers in Northwest Wisconsin who have expressed interest in expanding a grassroots network of self-advocates. We're looking for people who are interested in joining the Grassroots Advocacy Network. Our current focus is getting information about Self Directed Supports out to as many consumers as possible.

Do you want to learn more about Long Term Care in the state of Wisconsin?

Are you willing to participate in once-a-month, small group discussions in your area?

Are you willing to share your phone number and/or email address with others in your area who might have questions about Family Care and the Waiver that will be available beginning in 2009?

Are you currently on a waiting list for services? Do you already receive some long term care services? Do you expect that you may require additional help to live, work and recreate where you want to?

Would you like to receive communications about legislative or community actions to help improve the lives of people living with disabilities?

Have you ever had a mentor or a friend you could turn to with any question? No question was inappropriate. Their willingness to share their experience put you at ease, supplied answers to questions you often didn't even think to ask, or directed you to people or services you didn't know existed.

North Country Independent Living continues to build a network of peer support persons through grassroots organizing. Come be part of the group! We need you!

**Please contact Martha at the Ashland office of NCIL to get involved.
Phone 800-499-5676 or 715-682-5676 or
email ncilmartha@superior-nfp.org.**



**A special thank-you to
our volunteers who
helped make our picnic a
great success!**



Benefits Corner

Economic Stimulus Payments-It's not too late!

If you are on SSDI or Railroad Retirement Disability and received at least \$3,000.00 last year you may be eligible for an Economic Stimulus payment from the IRS. In addition, if you are on SSI and worked or had other income of \$3,000.00 you can qualify. Payments start at \$300.00 for an individual and \$600.00 for a qualifying couple.

Wisconsin Homestead Credit

If you have low income and pay rent or property tax you may be eligible for Wisconsin's Homestead Credit. This is a refund of a percentage of property taxes paid on the property. In order to file, you must get a Rent Certificate from your landlord or a copy of your tax statement, and then complete a Homestead Credit Claim form (schedule H-EZ). If you haven't filed before and think you may be eligible for past years, you can file for up to three prior years also. For more information or assistance contact North Country.



Support Groups



Superior MS Support Group meets the second Tuesday of each month from 6-8 p.m. at the Superior Public Library. For more information, contact Pam at 394-6958.

Ashland MS Support Group meets the third Wednesday of the month at Chequamegon Clinic, Ashland, Community Meeting room. Call Peggy, 682-6506.

All phone numbers are in area code 715 unless otherwise noted.

Ashland Area Brain Injury/Stroke Support Group meets the third Wednesday of the month in the North Twin Island meeting room of Memorial Medical Center, 1-2 p.m. For more information, call Stewart at the North Country office in Ashland.

Barron County Fibromyalgia/CFS/Chronic Pain Support Group meets every 2nd Thursday of each month from 1-3 in the counsel room/upper floor at the Chetek Lutheran Church 1419 Second St. Chetek, WI. Educational materials are available to sign out. We also have speakers from time to time. Call 651-9011 or 237-2798 for further information. Email: FMS_CFSBARRONCOUNTY@YAHOO.COM. We also have an online support group at:

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/FibroMECFChronicPainFrendsandFamily/>

A Parent and Caregiver Support group for Autism Spectrum Disorders meets the third Thursday of the month from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at CESA 12 in Ashland, 618 Beaser Ave. Parents, friends, relatives welcome. Child care provided. For more information, call Shannon at 715-292-0711 or e-mail at:

shannon@ncis.net

Visually Impaired Support Group meets the third Wednesday at 1:30 at 700 Division Street, Park Falls. Call Arnold for more information, at 715-762-4018.

Family Care and the SDS Waiver for Long Term Care in WI

A few questions and answers from consumers and families:

Question: I like my personal care worker. Can I keep this service under Family Care?

Answer: Yes, provided that the care worker and/or agency are willing to contract with the MCO (Managed Care Organization).

Q: Under the SDS Waiver or Family Care, will my plan change?

A: Plans may change. There will be a new, member-centered plan resulting from the ADRC screening process; services may be increased or decreased depending on the key outcomes for the consumer and how they can be met.

Q: What happens if I don't agree with the decisions under Family Care? Will my choices for doctors or health providers change?

A: Every change in a member's plan is in writing. If a member disagrees, they have the right, and should exercise that right to appeal. Members still have their choice of doctors. For some health services, the MCO will have a provider network. In general, the MCO will contract with any Medicaid provider for services covered within the Family Care Benefit Package. For all other health services, the member will have their choice of providers.

Q: Who can go with me to the ADRC screening?

A: The consumer/member can have anyone they choose participate in the process with them.

Q: Who can make referrals to services?

A: The member should be the one to do this; the team would support the member to assure the member's health care goals are met.

Q: Can I switch from Family Care to the SDS Waiver or back again?

A: Yes.

Q: If I live in an Adult Family Home, is this an option under the Waiver?

A: No. Consumers living in Adult Family Homes will be expected to transition to a more independent living site within 90 days of sign-up.

For more questions and answers, go to <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/lcicare/INDEX.HTM> . DHFS has agreed to post Q&A on their website in the near future. Or see <http://www.northcountryil.com/> for more information about ongoing changes to Wisconsin's Long Term Care system.



Calendar of Events

All phone numbers are in area code 715 unless otherwise noted.

First Monday of the month, Family Care Developmental Council, Ramada Inn, Hayward, 10290, Highway 27 South and county road B, 9-3. Open to the public. The Developmental Council is the new planning group for the expansion of Family Care in northern Wisconsin.

August 18, Get Out the Vote workshop for the disabilities community, 4-6 p.m. Superior Public Library. Presented by North Country Independent Living and the Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition, the workshop will provide information on voting rights and get out the vote techniques. It is free of charge and this is a non-partisan event. To register, call Cheryl at NCIL, Superior or e-mail her at: ncilcheryl@superior-nfp.org Limited stipends available.

August 18, 7-8:30 Candidate Forum featuring the candidates for the 73rd Assembly District, Superior Public Library. This Assembly seat is open due to the retirement of Frank Boyle. We have invited all the candidates: Mary Tripp, Vern Johnson, Bruce Meyers, Nick Milroy and Jeffery Monaghan for a moderated forum on disability issues.

August 19, Get Out the vote workshop for the disability community, 4-6 p.m. M & I Bank, Ashland. (see information above). Contact Cheryl at North Country if you plan to attend. Limited stipends available.

August 19, Candidate Forum featuring the candidates for the 74th Assembly District, 7-8:30, M & I Bank, Ashland. Incumbent Representative Gary Sherman (D-Port Wing) is being challenged in a primary election. We have invited all the candidates: Rep. Sherman, Alan Ralph, (D) Shirl LaBarre (R). for a moderated forum on disability issues.

WISLOAN

WisLoan is a statewide, low interest loan program that allows a Wisconsin resident with a disability to purchase assistive technology or make home modifications so that he or she can live more independently or productively. **Contact North Country for more information.**

WisLoan is a federally-funded project of the National Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation Research

Donation for North Country Independent Living

North Country welcomes your support in fulfilling its mission of empowering people with disabilities. Your contribution is tax deductible. North Country Independent Living is a non-profit agency with 501(c)3 status.

Enclosed is my donation of \$ _____

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## **ALTERNATE FORMATS AVAILABLE**

If you require any of this information in an alternate format, please contact us.