

One Consumer's Story Stewart Holman

With this issue of North Country News, we are beginning a year-long celebration of what North Country has meant to consumers and family members over the last 20 years.

What our work is really about is assisting people with disabilities to gain the skills and confidence to live as independently as they are able. During the year, we plan to feature several consumers who will share their stories.

One such consumer is 36 year old Tara Neigebauer of Superior. Tara is a person with bi-polar disorder and ADHD. Some five years ago, Tara says she was having a lot of difficulty doing the housework and organizing her day. Tara was sleeping a lot and not keeping her apartment clean. Things got so bad that she faced eviction.

Tara talked with North Country and Dee Truhn went to see her. Tara laughs about it now, but Dee said to her, "Get up or get out!" Dee helped Tara organize her daily tasks and put everything on a calendar with her. Dee also worked with the housing authority to schedule frequent inspections so they could see the effort Tara was making. Dee also encouraged Tara to keep going for "herself and also her kids."

Tara says that Dee had faith in her when she didn't have faith in herself. "She went out on a limb for me," Tara commented, and she says that Dee talked her through a lot of things.

Actually one of the first times that Tara contacted North Country was because her son needed help with his Individual Education Plan (IEP) for school. Tara wants to thank Scott and Gloria for all their help along the way too.

Over the years Tara has also been a volunteer for North Country. She has worked on getting the newsletter out and helped to organize our lending library of assistive technology. She appreciates the chance to come in and be around other people with disabilities. As a result, Tara says she is learning to live with her disability more effectively.

"She would be quite impressed," is how she feels Dee would respond if she saw her apartment today.

"If it weren't for North Country, I wouldn't be where I am today," says Tara. Tara has continued to work hard at her job, too, becoming a manager at the restaurant where she works.

In the years ahead, we hope Tara and other consumers and family members will continue to think of North Country Independent Living when they need help and support in becoming empowered members of our community.

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**Don't Forget to
VOTE...
Wisconsin Primary
is February 19th.**

Telecommunication and Internet Access Project

Do you have trouble using the telephone due to a hearing loss or mobility issue? Do you wish you had access to the internet and all the information than it holds? North Country has a new project that aims to assist consumers in overcoming barriers to communication services by assisting with accessing basic telephone equipment and to assist consumers in learning about and getting access to the internet.

For persons with a disability who have barriers to accessing telephone service, there is an existing program called the Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program, or TEPP that can help pay for phone equipment to alleviate the barriers. In some cases there is a \$100.00 co-pay and North Country's new program can help cover that co-pay cost. As part of this program staff can assist the consumer with assessment and try-out of equipment, and help with applying for the TEPP program and ordering appropriate equipment.

The second part of this new program is to assist consumers in learning about and getting access to the internet. North Country staff will meet with the consumer and explain the various options for getting internet access and for those consumers that are income eligible there is a \$200.00 stipend to help cover the cost of acquiring initial internet service. If you are interested in either of these programs or would like an application packet contact Cheryl Stevens at our Superior office.

Public Transportation for Washburn County

The much-anticipated roll-out of Washburn County's new public transportation service is now planned for later this spring. The service will feature trips to Shell Lake and Spooner each week-day from Birchwood, Minong, Hertel and other locations, with return service to the same outlying communities late afternoon. Mid-day "circulator" routes connecting Shell Lake and Spooner, on-demand service which may be scheduled one day in advance, and special periodic routes connecting outlying communities to destinations such as Rice Lake and Hayward, are also planned.

Plans for the new service were developed by the Washburn County Transportation Council and Sawyer County LCO Transit with support from North Country. Funding for the service has been provided by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation through its Supplemental Transportation Rural Assistance Program (STRAP) and by Washburn County. STRAP is a new program intended to stimulate development and expansion of Wisconsin's rural public transit systems.

For more information on this new service, contact Bob Olsgard, North Country Transportation Coordinator.

Enjoy Wheelchair Curling

Looking for a fun winter activity? If so, try the ancient sport of Curling, in which wheelchair players use a stick to slide heavy, polished granite stones down the pebbled ice towards a target area called "the house." Courage Duluth, along with the Duluth Curling Club is sponsoring "open curling" for any person with a disability who wants to try the sport, sometimes called "chess on ice."

The next date is March 7th at 5:30 p.m. Contact Courage Duluth for more information and for directions to the Duluth Curling Club, (218) 726-4762.



Three Ways to Get More FamilyCare News

1) E-News to your email:

An easy and paperless way to get the latest FamilyCare news, meeting dates, and other important information is by “electronic” newsletter sent right to your email. Just send your email address and state your area of interest (member) to nwfamilycare@yahoo.com

2) Newsletter by regular mail: If you prefer a paper version of the newsletter, contact FamilyCare by calling 715-635-2049 or writing to Northwest FamilyCare Collaborative, 110 Timberlane Road, Spooner, WI 54801 and include your name, address, and area of interest (member).

3) Check the Web: www.nw-ltco.org

Also watch for a new and improved site to launch in February.



Calendar of Events

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

February 4, Northwest Wisconsin Long Term Care Options Consortium, Ramada Inn, 10290, Highway 27 South and County Road B, Hayward, 9-3. Public input encouraged. The consortium meets the first Monday of the month.

February 19, Wisconsin Presidential Primary and primary election.

February 22 2-3 p.m. Open Mic call in session for consumers and family members. (See page 6) This will be your opportunity to call in and ask a question about long term care and the expansion of Family care in northern Wisconsin. You can call if you have a question or just to listen to other participants. Here is the call in number: 1-800-617-4268, then #, then pin code: 20942806. North Country will be providing space at their office in Superior for consumers to ask questions. Call our Superior office if you are interested.

March 6 & 7, Assistive Technology Across the Lifespan Conference, Holiday Inn Convention and Expo Center, Stevens Point. Call 800-991-5576 for more information.

April 3, 1 p.m. North Country Board of Directors, Superior. Call John Nousaine for more information.

April 14, 15 & 16, Long Term Care Annual Conference, La Crosse. Please watch for more information on this conference in March.

May 12-14, 6th Annual National ADA Symposium on the American's with Disabilities Act. America's Center in Downtown St. Louis, Missouri. Applications and stipends can be completed online visit their website at www.adasymposium.org or by contacting the Great Lakes Center at 800-949-4232 between 8-5 central time.

May 16, 17, & 18, Fishing Has No Boundaries, Hayward. Fee, \$60 per participant and \$30 per attendant. Call 800-243-3462 for an application or e-mail: janetfhnvinc@cheqnet.net Also visit their web page: www.fhnvinc.org Registrations are due by April 25th. Early application is suggested as this event tends to fill up quickly.

Wheelchair Recycling Program

Are you in need of medical equipment and can't afford it or get it covered by insurance? Then you may want to check out the Wheelchair recycling program. This program refurbishes donated used pieces of mobility and medical equipment to like new condition. WRP sells refurbished equipment at low cost to consumers in need. Consumers can pay independently or can apply for a WisLoan.

The Wheelchair recycling program was established in 1988 in Madison, Wisconsin, as an all-volunteer effort to send used medical equipment overseas. It soon became apparent there were serious needs here in Wisconsin, so WRP opened an office in Milwaukee in 2001, and through having two offices, WRP now offers its services statewide with the help of local Independent Living Centers. In 2005 WRP provided nearly 1,100 mobility and medical items at low cost to Wisconsin residents. Equipment includes many types of mobility devices such as wheelchairs, walkers, scooters, etc. For more information or to view an online catalog of equipment you can check their website at: www.wrp.org

For specific information contact information listed below:

Julie Schultz, WRP Executive Director

Email: jschulz@wrp.org

Tom Kenney, Milwaukee Program Director

Email: tkenney@wrp.org

2711 W. Wells Street

Milwaukee, WI 53208

Phone: 414-313-1303

Jeff Veum, Madison Program Director

2554 Advance Road

Madison, WI 53718

Phone: (608) 243-1785

Fax: (608) 243-1787

Email: jveum@wrp.org

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 Independent Living staff are able to answer questions you may have. Call 800-924-1220 v/tty.

North Country Welcomes Martha Oie, Grassroots Organizer

Hello. My name is Martha Oie, and I'm excited to join the staff at North Country Independent Living as the Grassroots Organizer. I've worked around disability advocacy most of my life. I'm originally from the Twin Cities, but have lived in the northland for over 7 years – the last three in Iron River, WI.

Much of my work will be networking with consumers, family members, agencies and community members to organize a peer support network and conduct informational meetings about the upcoming expansion in Wisconsin's Family Care program. The choices that consumers make about living, working, and recreating where and when and with whom they choose has always been the focus of the Independent Living movement. Self Directed Supports (SDS) empower consumers to maximize their options and think outside the standard benefits and care management offered previously. We will discuss the products and services offered under Family Care – including the SDS Waiver and standard MA Card Services – and how this process will be unfolding over the next two years.

We are counting on your participation in growing this peer support and information network. I look forward to meeting you! Stay in touch with North Country News and local newspapers for meeting times. For more information contact Martha at ncilmartha@superior-nfp.org.

Women with Disabilities

Gloria Hakkila-Johnson

When I was asked to write an article on women the first thing I did was get on the internet. Here is what I found :

1. There are 28 million Women with disabilities in the U.S. (www.bcm.edu/crowd/)
2. Women with disabilities are disproportionately likely to have poor access to health care, decreased screening for conditions common in all women, increased incidence of secondary complications and diminished quality of life. (<http://www.womenwithdisabilities.org/modules/index.html>)
3. Women with disabilities are faced daily with environmental barriers, lack of information and negative social attitudes. Many are highly resilient to the effects of these inequities, but others do not have the positive upbringing or social support to maintain their sense of personal value. (www.bcm.edu/crowd/)
4. Women with disabilities experience a high incidence of abuse; physical, emotional and sexual. (http://members.tripod.com/~Barbara_Robertson/Women.html)
5. People with disabilities in general face difficulties getting employment but men with disabilities are twice likely to be employed than women with disabilities. (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/enable/index.html>)
6. Women with disabilities are the poorest of the poor around the world. (http://members.tripod.com/~Barbara_Robertson/Women.html)

After reading these articles I realized how important it is for women to support each other and share information/resources with each other. We need to join forces and become part of the power to ensure change. We can do this by increasing the visibility of women's issues and increasing collaboration with our community.



Support Groups

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

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 in the Stockton Island Room at Memorial Medical Center. Contact Peggy at 682-6506 for more information.

Ashland Area Brain Injury/ Stroke Support Group meets the third Wednesday of the month in the Twin Island Meeting Room of Memorial Medical Center, Ashland. For more information, contact Stewart in the Ashland office.

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/FibroMECFCSCronicPainFriend-sandFamily/>

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

New Long-Term Care Approach Focuses on Four Goals

Many questions remain to be answered as long-term care in Wisconsin, known as Family Care, is reformed and a new managed care organization in northwest Wisconsin is created in the coming year. There is no question, however, about the foundation that will support the reform.

“We really have four guiding principals in place as we build a new long-term care model, said John McMahon, FamilyCare development director. “They are all centered on members receiving the support they need to live the way they want to live.”

Following are the four goals and what they mean for members.

Access--People get services they need, when they need them.

No more waiting lists. If individuals meet the requirements, they are eligible for services on day one. Members will be assisted in maintaining their eligibility and kept informed of the benefits to which they are entitled. FamilyCare helps members get connected to the resources they need for long-term supports as well as healthcare.

Choice--People have meaningful choices about where they receive care and how they live their lives.

Member-centered care. FamilyCare helps members find options for living arrangements and other individual needs and preferences and explains the choices available for a full range of services.

Quality--Services work to support good quality of life for each consumer.

Member satisfaction. Quality is determined by whether members feel their goals are met. Care plans will be monitored to see if the services are working and, if they are not, how to improve them.

Cost-effectiveness--Cost-effective system that is sustainable into the future.

Getting the best results for the money spent. Matching the services and quality members want with the choices available is not always the cheapest, but is cost-effective. Getting the right service, at the right time, in the right amount is key to helping members live the life most meaningful to them.

FamilyCare On the Line Learn More and Ask Questions During Phone Call-In

If you'd like to learn more about FamilyCare, where the planning is at, and what it will eventually mean for members, you can join others in a phone conversation.

“Open mic or microphone means that everyone phoning in will be on the same line and can participate in asking questions,” said John McMahon, FamilyCare development director. “It’s not only important for us to get people the answers, but to find out what kind of questions they are asking. That kind of information helps us as we build the new organization.”

Dial the toll-free number listed below and then the pin # and you will be connected. You can participate or simply listen to the conversation. You may also call in at any time during the hour. The important thing is that FamilyCare information gets out to those who need it--so pass the word.

FamilyCare “Open Mic” Telephone Call-In Friday, February 22 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Agenda:

Overview of Family Care Planning

Questions & Answers from Callers

Discussion of Future Topics

Best Times/Dates for Future Conversations

Call Toll Free:

1-800-617-4268 pin code: 20942806#

If you would like to submit questions by mail for the Open Mic conversation, please send them to:

Open Mic Questions, Northwest FamilyCare Collaborative

110 Timberlane Road, Spooner, WI 54801

or email questions to: nwfamilycare@yahoo.com and tell us they are for the Open Mic call-in.

I know it's only recreation but I like it!

John Nousiane

Last week we donated one of our old Milty Bi-Ski to the Ashland Area Special Olympics. A Bi-Ski allows people who can't stand up the ability to ski. It is basically a seat situated over 2 independent, articulating skis. It had been a few years since this one had any use so I had to dig it out of our storage room and locate all of its' parts.

In 1991 North Country purchased a Milty Bi-Ski through our WisTech program. In 1991 ours was the first one east of the Rocky Mountains. It was huge success. It was used every week for several winters in the nearby Courage Duluth Ski Program. North Country and Wistech sponsored "Learn to Ski", clinics through out Wisconsin. Northland College students and local volunteers acquired Professional Ski Instructors of America (PSIA) certifications as instructors. Most of these folks still volunteer to assist many programs all over Wisconsin and the Midwest. Local ski legend Jim Kumbera led a charge to raise funds to acquire more adaptive ski equipment. North Country's adaptive ski stable grew to five Bi-Ski's, a Mono ski (a similar device with a seat situated over a single ski for a more aggressive ski experience), several outriggers (adaptive poles) and lots of other gadgets.

Our clinics were the only outlet for many skiers. Now newer higher tech bi-skis are common in several ski programs all over Wisconsin. Many consumers have their own equipment and developed their own ski buddies.

The old bi-ski's are still in service. Northland College has the original for use as a training aid for their students. Firesteel in the UP uses a couple in the Ironwood area. A great program exists in the Porky's as well. Our old buddy Jim Kumbera in North Central Wisconsin has one also. Midstate Independent Living Consultants still holds an annual ski event called "Avalanche".

Another North Country tradition was Rendezvous! The first Rendezvous was held at West End Park in Washburn, Wisconsin. The concept was one of peer support. Get a bunch of people with disabilities together to share their outdoor experience, equipment, adaptations and adventure. Waterskiing, camping, shooting sports were the events that year.

Over the next 10 years Rendezvous got bigger. New adventures were added, fishing, airplane rides, kayaking. As with skiing our volunteer base grew, Trek N trail, Dan Pollen and Fishing Has No Boundaries, Courage Duluth, Kim Culp and his airplane and of course Smokey the bear and Woodsy Owl. But always the signature marquee event was water skiing! Consumers were lined up on the shore waiting their turn.

The last Rendezvous was May 31st 2000 and the waterskiing was not as crowded. Why? Because there were other ski clinics and programs happening all summer long in lots of places. Opportunities germinated as consumers left with new ideas and sometimes new equipment.

And that is what it's all about; combining several IL concepts to empower consumers; The principals of our **Assistive Technology** program, **Exposure** to Assistive Technology, **Experimentation** with technology to see how it works for you then the **Acquisition** of the technology. It's obvious that recreation is **IL Skills Training**. Many opportunities for **Advocacy** have developed from these activities, some ski areas allow equipment they didn't before we came. Campgrounds made changes. People learn. It's **Grassroots** and it develops groups of folks trying to bring stuff to their communities. It recruits volunteers. Most rendezvous/ski volunteers are still doing it in their communities.

The biggest IL concept for me in all of this is **Peer Support**. Consumers gather around the fire discussing the days activities, past frustrations, future plans, sharing ideas and philosophies. What can be more northern Wisconsin than that?

History of North Country An Agent of Change

In January of 1988 six men and women came together to form the beginning of North Country Independent Living, Inc. They represented Wisconsin's six northern most counties on a board of directors for a new agency. The agency's mission was to assist people with disabilities to live as independently as their abilities allow. The board consisted of Tom Horst of Ashland, Stewart Holman of Washburn, Tom Poss of Hayward, Karen Walowinski of Hurly, Arnold Tucker of Park Falls and George Brothers of Superior. The fledgling agency was incorporated on March 22, 1988 and would have never gotten off the ground without the vision, support and sponsorship of Brian Soland and Catholic Charities Bureau.

The original budget was from a \$50,000 WI Dept of Community Services grant. The agency consisted of three staff working out of one office in Superior serving six counties. The agency provided the core services of Advocacy, Independent Living Skills Training, Information and Referral and Peer Support.

In 1988 the Americans with Disabilities Act was still a dream. It was legal to refuse to hire people with disabilities who were otherwise qualified for jobs. It was legal to exclude people with disabilities from public places and many services. You could vote, but there were no requirements for voting places to be accessible. Public accessibility requirements were a patchwork quilt of local and state laws, ignored by many municipalities and generally unenforceable. Disability concerns generally weren't in the collective conscious. People with disabilities were not included in planning or delivery of services specifically designed for consumers much less being involved in planning for other community projects and services.

In 2008 North Country serves eight counties in NW Wisconsin, has offices in Superior and Ashland, 13 staff and many volunteers with a budget over a million dollars. In addition to providing the core services over the years we also have provided transition and youth services, personal care, assistive technology, recreational programs, benefits counseling, disability navigator, employment projects, transportation coordination, various accessibility modification programs, supporting consumers groups and trainings.

The ADA is only one of several federal, state and local protections for the rights of people with disabilities. You can vote in an accessible location with an accessible voting machine. Businesses, communities and schools are mindful of disability concerns and it is considered foolhardy to blow off disability concerns and it is considered best practice to include people with disabilities in planning or consultation about such issues in all facets of life. Businesses, schools, municipalities, families and legislators consider North Country the place to call when you have a question, want an idea, have an idea or need consumers to get involved. The notion of involving people with disabilities is valued as a best practice in community planning.

Northern Wisconsin isn't a Utopia; we have along way to go to get ourselves where we need to be. But we've come along way and it's the collective result of blood, sweat and tears. Through it all North Country never lost site of its role as an advocate for consumers. We are an agent of change and have taken that responsibility seriously and with enthusiasm.

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.

Founder of the Independent Living Movement Ed Roberts, 1939-1995

“It was the attitude of people that I would get my PhD and then go live in a nursing home.” That’s how Ed felt about how others saw his future in those days in 1962 when he and a few friends with disabilities began what became the Independent Living Movement at the University of California at Berkeley. Ed said there were 10 of us then, people with disabilities, integrating the whole community.

Ed said people expected them to fail; they were threatened by eviction from school, not because they were failing, but because they had disabilities and were loud about their civil rights. They became known as the “Rolling Quads. Ed says people realized how powerful they were and how they stuck together.

The first Independent Living Center opened in 1971 in Berkeley, as the result of Ed’s efforts. North Country began in 1988. Part of our history is Ed’s history.

What we said about Ed Roberts 10 years ago is even more true today as we celebrate our 20th anniversary. What Ed leaves behind is an attitude. People with disabilities need to know they can and should control their own lives. They need to know that being a person with a disability is more than okay, it’s a part of who we are.

(Some of the information provided for this article provided by Independence First, Milwaukee).

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 (NIDRR) and the U.S Dept. of Education.

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 \$ _____

Name _____

Organization/Company _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Mail to:
North Country Independent Living
2231 Catlin Ave. Suite 16
Superior, WI 54880

I would like to volunteer at North Country



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### **ALTERNATE FORMATS AVAILABLE**

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