

Economic Stimulus Payments

On February 17, 2009, President Barack Obama signed into law the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*. This law provides for a one-time economic recovery payment of \$250 to people who get certain types of Federal benefits. The law provides for a one-time payment for certain individuals who receive Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Railroad Retirement and Veterans benefits. If you were eligible for one of these benefits at any time during the months of November 2008, December 2008 or January 2009, you may be eligible for the one-time payment. You should receive your one-time payment by the end of May 2009. **You don't need to do anything** to receive this payment. Social Security does not need to contact you to request information. The Department of the Treasury will be sending payments throughout the month of May. If both you and your spouse are receiving benefits from Social Security or SSI, you each will get the one-time payment. The one-time payment will not count as income for SSI. Also, it will not count as a resource in the month you receive it or the following nine months.

Children receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are eligible for the one-time payment. Children who receive other Social Security benefits are NOT eligible for the one-time payment. However, adult children who receive disability benefits on a parent's record will receive a payment.

Northwest CEP Offers Summer Youth Employment Program

President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) on February 17, 2009. Included in the ARRA was money for a summer youth employment program. The funding may be used to pay wages for eligible youth (with or without disability) to work between May 1 and September 30.

Eligibility Requirements for the program: A) Age 14 – 24 B) Low-income.

If you are interested in referring a youth please contact the CEP office in your local job center.

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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If you would like to receive North Country News via email please contact North Country at ncilcheryl@superior-nfp.org or call 800-924-1220v/tty

Director's Corner

Friends of North Country,

The Governors budget calls for a **56% cut in state general purpose revenue (GPR)** to Independent Living Centers (ILCs). Each ILC receives both state and federal base funds, each with varying rules for distribution and flexibility. **The combined effect is likely a 30% cut to North Country's base funding!** Wisconsin will receive some federal assistance through the efforts of Rep Dave Obey. We don't know how much however the current formula driven distribution would represent a small increase for North Country as we receive a small portion of federal funds.

This will cause severe cuts to our abilities to provide core services for consumers. This comes in a time when our core services are needed the most. Every aspect of consumer's existence is affected by the economy. Consumers are against the wall with the economy. Demand for service is increasing from consumers. Also the advent of family care requires more from us assisting consumers, providers, Aging and Disability Resource Centers, Managed Care organization, etc.

This cut to our base is permanent which means future budget considerations will start at the reduced level. We are trying to get the ILC cuts considered a lapse in service which would recognize the original figure in future budget consideration.

I would ask you to contact your legislators and voice your support of Independent Living and North Country and express the need for these services. If you have a story about how IL or North Country affected your life, please tell it to your legislator in a phone call, letter, e-mail or in person. If **some GPR can be restored** that would be wonderful. To have **the cut considered a lapse in funding vs. a cut to base** would be helpful in the future.

John Nousaine
Director

Public Forum on STRIDE

On Wednesday April 15th Superior's STRIDE transportation service was in the spotlight at a community forum held by the Superior Mayor's Commission and North Country. In all, 36 consumers, educators, city councilors and members of the Mayor's Commission attended the three hour session.

The Forum featured presentations by STRIDE's Jim Heilig and Disability Rights Wisconsin's Genie Hedlund. Presentations were followed by a question and answer period moderated by Fox 21's Julie Moravchik.

Arnold Hokanson was one of the meeting's organizers. He says he was pleased by the turnout. "I was amazed at the number of people who attended," said Hokanson, adding; "we had good questions and straight-forward answers." He also admits he has concerns; "I was disappointed that the Mayor wasn't there. We need the Mayor's presence to be sure the solutions we come up with are on a solid foundation."

*****Brand-name drugs that treat heart disease aren't better than their FDA-approved generic versions.**

SSI Telephone Wage Reporting

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients and representative payees can now report monthly wages to Social Security (SSA) by using an automated telephone system. During the first six days of a month, SSI recipients can report their work earnings from the prior month to SSA by calling a special 800 number. A person can choose which of the six days to call, but will not be able to report wages using the special 800 number after the sixth day of the month.

To use the 800 number, the caller must be able to clearly state first and last name information, understand requests for information given by the automated system, and either speak or use the telephone keypad to enter date of birth and social security number information. A receipt will be automatically generated to the reporter once the report is made.

There are certain exclusions, such as the earner who has more than one employer, or when Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE) or a Plan for Achieving Self Support apply to the month. To find out more about this new wage reporting option contact your local Social Security office.



Calendar of Events

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

First Monday of the month, Northern Bridges Board of Directors meeting, Ramada Inn, Hayward, 10290, Highway 27 south and County Road B, 9-3. Open to the public. Northern Bridges board is responsible for implementing the expansion of Family Care in northern Wisconsin.

National Council on Independent Living, June 5-8, 2009 Grand Hyatt, Washington D.C. Register early by going to: <http://ncil.org/conference/conference2009.html>. E-mail: ncil@ncil.org or call 202-207-0334, 202-207-0340 (TTY).

SAVE THE DATE, United We Stand...June 29-30, 2009, A conference By and For consumers of mental health services to create a new and inclusive statewide consumer network for all. This conference will be held at the Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells. Scholarships will be available. North Country will have more information soon.

July 10, 2009, North Country Board of Directors meeting, Ashland. Contact John Nousaine in our Superior office for more information.

Midwest Advocacy Project

Want to get involved and learn more about improving brain injury services, but not sure how to go about it?

Becoming a successful advocate is an important way to improve services for individuals with traumatic brain injury, their family members, and significant others. The Brain Injury Association of Wisconsin is partnering with the Mayo Clinic TBI Model System in a research study to identify how to best teach advocacy to people touched by TBI to improve their health and that of their communities. This groundbreaking study is expected to advance the science of TBI research.

If you are at least 18 years of age and a person or family member affected by a moderate to severe TBI a year or more ago, you are invited to participate in this research study. You will be asked to attend four monthly training sessions in Madison. Travel expenses will be covered for those residing at least 60 miles from the training site. All participants will receive a stipend upon completion of the four sessions.

Please contact the Brain Injury Association of Wisconsin at 1-800-882-8292 or 1-262-790-9660 for additional information and/or an application. The deadline for applications is **June 15, 2009**.

For Rent - For Sale

Accessible Cabin for rent: \$100/night. Located between Rhinelander and Tomahawk on black top road. Completely furnished barrier free cabin rented daily or weekly. Close to numerous lakes with excellent fishing and perfect for wildlife viewing, recreation and just relaxing. Restaurants and bars near-by. Surrounded by forests. This is a place you will for sure want to come back too year after year. Enjoy all the Northwoods has to offer!

If interested call Jim and Wendy Baker at 715-321-0777 or email jbaker2@tds.net

For Sale----2001 Legend scooter, 4 wheels, 500 lb. capacity. \$1500, 715-392-6612 after 1:00 p.m.

*****As your collar size grows, so does your risk of heart disease. Neck fat adds to your risk of heart disease, over and above the known heart risk from belly fat.**

North Country's Grassroots Peer Support in Full Swing

Thanks to the friends and staff of North Country Independent Living, grassroots advocacy peer support groups are building across northwest Wisconsin. North Country provides basic facilitation, and we're collaborating with consumers and agencies across our service area to build a peer support and resource network. One member developed the group name, and another designed a logo. We are **DARING: Disability Advocacy, Resource and INclusion Groups**.

We've been educating consumers and agencies about self-direction within Family Care and IRIS. Northern-Bridges and the IRIS waiver carry a powerful message of consumer direction and outcomes to those using long term care services and supports. We expect – we demand full participation and integration into our communities, and we work to eliminate barriers to independence. With respect to reasonable outcomes and fiscal responsibility, we live and work and recreate how, when, where and with whom we choose.

DARING members meet in their own communities or communicate by phone and email to share resources and personal stories that empower each other. Discussions and actions center around transportation/paratransit, CCS, DBSA, IEP advocacy, adaptive equipment and technology, employment, benefits, funding, advocacy - individual successes and systems change – transition, Family Care, IRIS, consumer rights, legal rights, ADA regulations, volunteering in the community, recreation, social networking, responding to disability action alerts at local, state and federal levels, and on and on.

Please join us! Contact Martha at ncilmartha@superior-nfp.org or 218-393-7319 or 715-372-6304, or at the Ashland office of NCIL at 800-499-5676 V/TTY.

The Employment Emergency Grant

There is a grant called the Employment Emergency Grant. It is a program that is administered by Independence First in Milwaukee. The grant program is designed to help people who have disabilities and are working or are self-employed to stay working. The grant can cover certain work related expenses. The grant limit is \$1000 one time only. The applications are conveniently simple to fill out. An Independent Living Specialist at North Country Independent Living helps consumers figure out if they qualify for applying for the grant, then help consumers apply for the grant by submitting a narrative that supports the applicant's request. The consumer submits the application with an invoice that shows the amount of the item or items to be purchased and the vendor's information. The application is submitted to Independence First in Milwaukee for review. If the grant is approved, a check is submitted directly to the vendor. The grant has limited funds and once funding is used up for 2009, the grant for 2009 will end.

Rural Transit Services Expand

Rural transit services Bay Area Rural Transit and Namekagon Transit continue to expand their services to reach more of our areas' communities with affordable, accessible transportation.

Bay Area Rural Transit or BART, has added two new routes. Service is now available Monday and Thursday for riders along Highway 13 with stops in Mellen, Highbridge and Marengo. Also new this year is service every Tuesday to Port Wing, Herbster and Cornucopia. For more information and schedules for these or BART's other routes call: 682-9664.

In the Washburn County area, Namekagon Transit has also added new routes, connecting the communities of Spooner and Shell Lake with Minong and Trego along highway 53 and Hayward, Stanberry, Earl, Springbrook and Cumberland along highway 63. Advance reservations are required for some routes. To reserve or for more information please call Namekagon Transit at: 866-295-9599.

Voucher Program Continues Enrollment

Since early in January, North Country has been signing up riders who qualify for our popular transportation voucher program. And the enrollment process continues. So if you or a family member or friend would like to find out more about signing up for our voucher program, please contact Bob Olsgard, Transportation Coordinator at: ncilbob@superior-nfp.org or toll free at 800-924-1220, extension 20.



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 from 1-2 p.m.. For information, call Stewart at the North Country office in Ashland.

Barron County Fibromyalgia/CFS/Chronic Pain Support Group, meets every second Thursday of each month from 1-3 p.m. in the counsel room/upper floor at the Chetek Lutheran Church, 1419 Second Street, Chetek, WI. Call 651-9011 or 237-2798 for informa-

Support Groups

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

tion. E-mail: FMS_CFSBARRONCOUNTY@yahoo.com

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.

A Parent and Caregiver Support Group for Autism Spectrum Disorders, meets the third Thursday of the month from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Ashland County Human Services, 630 Sanborn Ave, Ashland. Parents, friends, and relatives are welcome. Child care is provided. For more information, call Shannon at 292-0711 or e-mail: Shanle@centurytel.net

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

Ashland Area Low Vision Support Group, meets the second Wednesday of the month at the Ashland Senior Center. Call the Senior Center for more information, 682-4414.

MS Circle of Hope Support Group, meets the third Wednesday of each month, 2-3 p.m. at Chequamegon Clinic, 415 Ellis Ave., Ashland. For more information, call Peggy at 682-6506 or Georgann at 682-4734.

Transportation Assistance Programs

Services available to ease individuals and families problems in getting to employment, education, job interviews and getting children to daycare

- A door to door **Vanpool Service** for qualified individuals in Douglas County who need to get to employment, education or a job interview. The vanpool will also drop/pickup children at daycare facilities on the way to/from parents place of employment/education/interview. Hours of service are Monday through Friday 5:00 am to 11:00 pm. (Weekend service is not available at this time.) Please call for qualifications, availability and monthly fee information.
- A **Down Payment Assistance Program** for qualified families (must have a minor child) in Douglas County who are experiencing trouble with reliable transportation to employment and/or education. This program will provide up to \$3000.00 at 0% interest in down payment assistance to help families in getting a loan. You must meet the minimum requirements of the program, which include: a valid driver's license, decent credit history, no recent history of OWI violations, carry full coverage insurance on the vehicle and have income enough to make the car loan payments.
- The **Auto Loan Program** is designed to help qualified low income families and individuals in Ashland, Bayfield and Douglas County with assistance in obtaining an affordable and dependable vehicle. If you have poor credit or no credit, have been denied financing by your bank or credit union but have the ability to pay, this program may be an option for you. Loans of up to \$4000.00 are provided at 0% interest to families or individuals working at least part time. There is a 5% loan administration fee that is due at the time of purchase and the buyer is responsible for the payment of tax, title and license fees. Payments are to be paid back over a period of 30 months.
Examples:
 - Loan amount \$4000 - tax \$220 + license fee \$148.50 + 5% admin fee \$200 = \$568.50 participant cost. Payments to NWCSA would be \$135 per month.
 - Loan amount \$3000 - tax \$165 + license fee \$148.50 + 5% admin fee \$150 = \$463.50 participant cost. Payments to NWCSA would be \$100 per month.

If you would like more information regarding the programs listed above, please contact Brenda at Northwest Wisconsin Community Services Agency, Inc. (NWCSA) at 1118 Tower Ave., Superior, by calling 715-392-5127 or by email at bkohel@northwest-csa.org.

*****Your cat may bring you a lot more than unconditional love after a tough day. Cat owners are less likely to die of a heart attack and other cardiovascular diseases than people who have never had a pet cat.**

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.

Gail Pearson Leaving North Country

Gail Pearson, long time Independent Living Specialist in the Superior office is leaving North Country. Her last day is May 1st. She is leaving North Country to pursue her own goal of starting a Day Care business specializing in children with disabilities. You may not know it but in addition to her full time job here at North Country, she has been doing day care part time for several years now, and has decided that this will be her new career. Those of you who have had the opportunity to know and work with Gail will probably realize that with her enthusiasm and spirit she should be very successful in her new venture. We at North Country will miss Gail, and we wish her all the best in her new career.

Little Known Facts About Heart Disease

*****Depression, anger, and hostility may be red flags of heightened heart disease risk, even if you don't have heart disease right now.**

*****Men might have more heart attacks, but women are more likely to suffer chest pain as a potential first sign of heart disease.**

*****Drinking plenty of milk and basking in the sun may make a man less likely to have a heart attack. Research links low levels of vitamin D -- the "sunshine vitamin" -- with a higher risk of heart attack in men.**

This and other * items in this newsletter are from: Web MD Health News**

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.

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 _____

I would like to volunteer at North Country

Mail to:
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Superior, WI 54880

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