

Help Redesign Long Term Care

You have an opportunity to help northern Wisconsin reshape how long term care services are delivered in our region. Northwest Wisconsin Long Term Care Options has been awarded a grant to develop a plan over the next 12-18 months. This plan will cover all areas of long term care, including aging and resource center development, how long term care will be governed, staffing and more.

It is very important that people with disabilities and their family members provide input into this planning process. People who use or will use long term care services need to speak up and provide input into how this system should look.

Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, Burnett, Iron, Price, Sawyer, Washburn, and Rusk Counties are included in this grant to plan the future of long term care in our region. North Country Independent Living plans to continue to be involved in this planning process. We will continue to write about long term care redesign in future issues of North Country News. However, two guiding principles for us, among many, is that individuals have a choice of where they want to live and that they receive the supports they need. Another key principle for us is that any redesign of long term care include an independent advocacy agency.

If you would like to be considered for this planning process, request a "Statement of Interest" form by contacting your county human services department.

Be Prepared

John Nousaine, Director

That's the Boy Scout Motto. I was a Boy Scout and realize truer words were never spoken. When you get down to it, nobody has more responsibility for your own well being than...guess who?...That's right! It's yourself.

Hurricanes, tornados, tsunamis, floods happen all the time. Sooner or later, you will be involved in an emergency. So what happens when that happens? As people with disabilities we can't always depend on responders knowing how to deal with our unique needs. Is it fair? No! Should we as advocates try to change that? Sure! Those are big parts of our advocacy agenda. It's a major topic for the Superior Mayor's Commission and North Country is part of a consortium of advocates and emergency preparedness professionals. Look for more to come in the future.

But your best bet in trying to survive is to have a personal plan. Disability Navigator John Nedden Durst (who recently returned from providing Hurricane Katrina relief) has the second in his series on developing a personal plan for an emergency.

And to all you old Scouts, I still remember most of my knots (well some of them).

Inside this issue:

<i>Transportation Update</i>	2
<i>Technology Corner</i>	2
<i>Youth Leadership Retreat</i>	3
<i>Calendar of Events</i>	3
<i>Disaster Prep</i>	4
<i>Support Groups</i>	5
<i>Resources</i>	7
<i>Social Security and Working</i>	9

Special points of interest:

- 50 Million Americans Report Having a Disability –Pg 4
- Get Help Opening a Checking or Savings Account –Pg 4
- Learning About Hearing Aids –Pg 6
- Consumers Need More Accessible Housing –Pg 7
- Telework & WisLoan –Pg 8

Transportation Summit Brings Transportation Community Together

Bob Olsgard, Transportation Coordinator

More than eighty participants representing Counties, Tribes, non-profits and private citizens attended the Northwest Wisconsin Transportation Summit on March 22nd in Hayward.

Presenters highlighted both opportunities and challenges for Human Services transportation here in the North. Keynote speaker Dan Dalton of Easter Seals Project Action told the crowd about new Federal Transportation programs and funding for people with disabilities and rural areas. Don Chatfield of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation encouraged all present to look at opportunities for rural transit, and how we can all work together to locate more transportation dollars.

Coordinated transportation panelists sketched out the details of three very different approaches for transportation. Pete Sanders of Sawyer County/LCO Transit told the group about how Sawyer County and the LCO community provide complete, coordinated transit county-wide. Dennis Stombaugh of the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living described how APRIL's model voucher programs have provided a great deal of transportation for rural people with disabilities with a minimum of administrative overhead. Karen Krupa from Interfaith Caregivers of Polk County and Barb Ceder from Polk County's Unit on Aging told about how they work together with volunteer drivers providing a wide range of trips.

Transportation Planning for Wisconsin Counties

A series of planning meetings will be held later this summer to develop coordinated human services transportation plans for our region. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation has contracted with Northwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission to hold one planning session for each of the 10 counties in its regional planning district; Ashland, Burnett, Bayfield, Douglas, Iron, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor and Washburn. The meetings will be open to the public. Transportation stakeholders, providers and riders are encouraged to attend. Dates and times for the 10 meetings have not been set. The DOT has posted information to be used during the half-day sessions on its' web site at:

www.dot.state.wi.us/localgov/transit/toolkit.htm

Wisconsin's Home Health Care Gets Low Rating

Home health care in Wisconsin ranked among the lowest in the nation in quality, according to a recent report from the Federal Government.

The state's home health care agencies overall ranked below average in 11 of 12 quality measures. That's according to the National Healthcare Quality Report. The report was compiled by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

The agency ranked the quality of home health care in Wisconsin as "very weak"---the same ranking as last year. Wisconsin's hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes were ranked above average in quality performance.

The report is based on surveys and information filed with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. (Advocacy Action News, May, 2006).

Technology Corner

For sale: 2000 Chevrolet Astro Van, all wheel drive, 6 cylinder. It has automatic transmission and 115,000 miles. Includes Crow River lift, raised roof. Excellent shape. Asking price is \$8,500.00 but negotiable. Call 715-392-8611 and ask for Skip.

For sale: 1994 Econo-line Van with Braun swing-away chair lift (800 lb capacity). 112,000 miles. Good shape and runs well. Asking price is \$6,000. Call Gladis, 608-786-0707.

For Sale: Chain link fence with posts. For more information, call Dea at 715-373-5000.

A Weekend Retreat: The Past Holds My Heritage The Present Holds My Dreams and I Hold My Future.

Pine Forest Lodge in Mercer was the site of a Youth Leadership retreat held May 5-7. Ten youth from northwestern Wisconsin high schools attended this weekend retreat. Activities focused on building leadership, self determination, and goal setting skills. The participants learned about the disability rights movement, disability awareness, culture and pride. Activities also included team building and role playing exercises.

For some youth it was the first opportunity to experience kayaking, fishing and catching crawfish. The campfire in the evening gave time for all to reflect on the day's activities.

Youth stated they were "thankful for the opportunity even if it was scary to go away with people they did not know well." They also said, "The activities made me think about what comes after high school." Students left the event with individual goal plans.

North Country Independent Living wishes to thank Peer Mentors, Justin Nicoletti, Becky Beckwell and Waylon Lampson and Volunteer Mary Schmidt for all their dedication and hard work. Thank you also to John and Cheri Stratte for their hospitality and accommodations while we were at the resort. The Independent Living Council of Wisconsin and United Way of Douglas County provided financial support for our event. Thanks to everyone that made this youth retreat possible.

North Country Independent Living hopes to continue this event on an annual basis. We also will be supporting the Youth Leadership Club which meets twice a month to continue developing leadership skills and participate in volunteer activities in the community.



Calendar of Events

Meeting Life's Challenges, a series of free teleclasses on Making Life Easier. These conferences are offered from the comfort of your home over the phone. The next one will be **June 14**, Bouncing Back, When Life Knocks You Down. **July 12**, the class is Too Pooped to Participate-Strategies For Finding More Energy. The time for both is 6-7 p.m. Central time. You can register up to the day of the class by visiting <http://meetinglifeschallenges.com/classes/index.php>. You can e-mail Shelley at help@MeetingLifesChallenges.com. If you don't have access to a computer, call Shelley at 608-824-0402. **North Country Board of Directors, Tuesday, July 11, 9-11**, at

Ashland office of NCIL, 422 West Third Street. Call John Nousaine in our Superior office for more information.

Dispelling the Myths Around Epilepsy, July 20, 8:30 to 2:30 Holiday Inn & Suites, 200 West 1st. St. Duluth. Cost is \$15 per person. However, financial help is available to those who qualify. Deadline for registration is July 14. Call 1-800-779-0777. This event is sponsored by the Epilepsy Foundation of Minnesota.

Destination Anywhere, a national exhibit for young artists with disabilities. If you are an artist with a disability, age 16-25, you are invited to participate. Destination Anywhere challenges young artists to consider a picture plan as a destination, a place where the viewer might take a trip they never ex-

pected. A total \$60,000 will be awarded to 15 finalists. Visit www.vsarts.org/VW call for instructions or call Jennifer Colaguori at 1-800-933-8721, ext. 3885. **Deadline for registration is July 14, 2006.**

Fishing Has No Boundaries, Chippewa Valley Chapter, **August 19 & 20**, Paradise Shores, Lake Holcombe, Holcombe, WI. This event is for persons with disabilities, their friends and family. No experience or fishing license required. Cost is \$60 per participant and \$35 for guest, family member or attendant. For more information, call David Lato at 1-800-228-3287 v/tty. lato@cilww.com.

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

50 Million Americans Report Having a Disability

The U.S. Census Bureau says that more than half of people with a disability of working age (21-64) had a disability. Four in 10 said they had a computer at home and 25 percent had a college degree.

Other findings from this 2002 survey which were just released:

- * Four million children ages 6-14 had a disability. Seventy-two percent of people 80 and over have a disability.
- * Nearly 11 million people, 6 and older need personal assistance every day.
- * For those 15 and older, nearly three million people used a wheelchair and nine million used a cane or a walker.
- * Nearly eight million people 15 and over had difficulty hearing normal conversation, including one million unable to hear.
- * Some 14 million people age 15 and older have mental illness or have some type of cognitive disability such as Alzheimer's.
- * Among adults ages 16 to 64, nearly 12 million people reported a disability that present barriers to becoming employed or holding a job.

Get Help Opening a Checking or Savings Account

Maybe you have never had a checking or savings account. Maybe you have had problems with an account in the past and are having difficulty opening an account now.

GET CHECKING is a program offered by Lutheran Social Services that can help you open these accounts again. GET CHECKING requires you to attend two, three-hour sessions offered throughout the summer in Duluth and Superior. Some of the things you will learn include low cost checking options, how to avoid costly fees, how to keep your checking account in balance and how your account helps you establish credit. Sessions are offered at 424 West Superior St. Suite 600, Duluth or at Lutheran Social Services, 2231 Catlin Ave., 4th floor, Superior. All sessions at both locations run from 5-8 p.m. The cost is \$20 for an individual and \$30 for a couple. When you have attended all six hours and passed a test at the end, you will receive a certificate.

You are asked to bring along your credit report from ChexSystems to the first class. Call 1-800-428-9623 or get it online at: www.chexhelp.com. All information from your report will be kept confidential. For more information on GET CHECKING, call LSS at 1-888-577-2227.

Disaster Preparation - The Second Step Is Stop & See!

To be better prepared as a community, we all have a part to play in a plan for disasters. All individuals, with or without disabilities, can decrease the impact of a disaster by taking steps to prepare BEFORE an event occurs. There are many sample plans and checklists available to guide you. However, your plans must fit your own unique circumstances.

Stop and see what supports you use daily or weekly! How would you manage in case of a disaster with no electricity? You can take small steps every day to become better prepared. Learn about how emergencies can impact you and your community. In this issue, consider

(Continued on page 5)

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.

See Page 8 of this Issue for more details.

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.

See Page 8 of this Issue for more details.

(Continued from page 4)

what your resources are so you can put them into your own disaster plan. Start today to become better prepared, safer and more secure!

Identify your Resources

Make a list of family, friends, co-workers, personal attendants, service providers and others who can be part of your disaster plan. Include people both in and out of your immediate neighborhood or community, like a relative or friend in another state where you might go. Talk to these individuals and ask them to be part of your support network that can be of assistance in the event of a disaster. Questions to ask of yourself are:

- * Do you depend on accessible transportation to get to work, doctor's appointments, or to other places in your community?
- * Do you use communication devices?
- * Do you receive medical treatments (e.g. dialysis) on a regular basis?
- * Do you need assistance with personal care?
- * Do you rely on electrically dependent equipment or other durable equipment?
- * Do you use mobility aids such as a walker, cane, or a wheelchair?
- * Do you have a service animal?

(Adapted from the National Organization on Disability
www.nod.org)

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

**In the Next Issue –
Making Your Plan****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 at 682-5676 v/tty or 1-800-499-5676 v/tty.

Women's Peer Support

Group meets the third Tuesday of each month, 10:30 a.m. at North Country Independent Living, Superior. Contact Gloria for more information, 392-9118 v/tty or 1-800-924-1220 v/tty.

Chronic Pain Support Group meets the first and third Wednesdays from 1–2 p.m. at the Goslin

**Abilities First...It Might
Offer the Help You Need**

Established by the Miller-Dwan Foundation, Abilities First might be able to close the gap so that you can get that special car seat or other device to increase independence. This special fund can help consumers and families bridge the gap between needing and having that medical equipment that may not be covered by insurance or Medicare.

Abilities First is a funding source of last resort. If you need a grab bar in your home to increase independence and you have tried all other funding sources, there is hope. Why not contact Abilities First? Other types of medical equipment may also be covered. Call the Miller-Dwan Foundation to find out more, 218-786-5829. They just might be able to offer the help you need.

Abilities First is a funding source of last resort. They just might be able to offer the help you need.

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

Court main building on Summit Street, Spooner. Contact Sue at 635-9138 for more information.

Recreation/Social Group

Meetings will be the first and third Wednesdays at 1:30 p.m. at North Country Independent Living, Superior. For more information, contact Gloria at 392-9118 v/tty or 1-800-924-1220 v/tty.

Youth Leadership Club

If you are in high school, grade 10 - 12, you may be interested in joining our club. Meetings are held in the Superior Office. Contact Gloria for more information, 392-9118 v/tty or 1-800-924-1220 v/tty.

Learning About Hearing Aids

Susan Stanke & Stewart Holman

Both of us have been doing some research on hearing aids, what's available and how to pay for them. Susan has been trying some new hearing aids recently to see how they perform at her job environment and in other environments. She has found that her new ones filter out some of the background noise she was experiencing with the older pair. She also says that her new ones allow her to hear speech better.

I am new to hearing aids. I have had difficulty hearing on the phone. I also have had trouble hearing when women are talking. People have said that this is a "male thing," and not related to my hearing loss. In any case, I have joined the world of those people who are using hearing aids.

I am still getting used to hearing more. When I started, everything sounded like a clang and a bang, with lots of paper noise and everything else going on around me. My audiologist explained that I was now hearing things I hadn't heard for about the past 20 years. Now after about a month or so, noises are not so jarring to me.

Susan has done a lot of work finding resources to pay for hearing aids. Hearing aids can be expensive, often running to one thousand dollars or more for each.

Here are some of the resources she has located that may be able to pay for hearing aids:

- * The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) may be able to help. DVR helps people with disabilities overcome barriers to finding and keeping work. If you have been accepted for services, you and your counselor will develop a written plan together. This plan could include hearing aids or other devices you may need on the job. Counselors are found in most counties and are often located in the area Job Service office. For example, DVR and the Job Service in Ashland share offices at 411 Ellis Ave. John Neddend-Durst is North Country's Disability Navigator and he or our other staff can help you locate the DVR Counselor in your area.
- * WisLoan Program, is a low interest loan program (now at 5%) that allows people with disabilities or their family members to take out a loan to purchase hearing aids or other devices to increase independence. This program can also help pay for vans with lifts, hand controls, and accessibility improvements such as ramps or widening doors. WisLoan is a federally-funded project of the National Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR).
- * Wisconsin Lions Foundation, 1-877-463-6953 v, 715-677-6999 tty. We have found that this organization has been very helpful in funding at least one hearing aid.
- * Audient, 1-877 audient. www.AUDIENTalliance.org. They cover limited models of hearing aids, for people on limited income.
- * Scholarship Trust for the Deaf and Near Deaf. Call 314-371-0533 for an application. Applications are due on March 1, 2007.
- * Wisconsin Medicaid will now cover some types of hearing aids. Prior Authorization is required. Hearing aids are expected to last three years.

For more help locating funding for hearing aids, contact North Country in either our Superior or Ashland office.

Buy and Sell Used Equipment

Try usedHME.com if you have a piece of home medical equipment that you want to sell or you are looking for items to increase your independence. There is a charge for listing an item for sale, but no charge for a giveaway. You may find items such a lift chairs, stair lifts, conversion vans and many more items. You can search on an item to see if what you need is available in your zip code or you can search all listings. You can place an ad on the site and it stays until your item sells. Call Gordy at 920-445-0124, or fax him at 920-437-3149. UsedHME.com is new and the offerings are expected to grow. Try it out.

Consumers Need More Accessible, Affordable Housing

The National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) has just released a position paper on housing for people with disabilities. Some of the highlights of the paper include:

- * People with disabilities need to be included in all decisions on housing policies and programs.
- * Single family homes and townhouses built with federal funds should be “visitable” with at least one wheelchair accessible entrance and at least one accessible bathroom.
- * NCIL supports new HUD funding for housing vouchers for people who are moving from institutions to the community or who are at risk of going to an institution.
- * NCIL supports new funding from HUD to allow people who hold vouchers to use these funds to pay for modifications to their housing.

The National Council on Independent Living is the national organization for North Country and all Independent Living Centers in the U.S. If you would like to see more of this paper, visit the NCIL website at: www.ncil.org or you can stop at our office in Superior or Ashland and get a copy.

Resources

Through a federal grant, the Foundation for Safe Housing is offering visual smoke alarms to those who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing and who meet financial guidelines. The alarms are free. Apply at: <http://www.safehousecampaign.com/application.php>.

Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has a new contact person in the Wausau office:

Mary Agnes Connor
2801 N. 7th Street, Suite 300
Wausau, WI 54403-3281
connoma@dhfs.state.wi.us
Toll Free TTY 888-241-9431 · Voice Relay 711

North Country’s Loan Closet Doesn’t Take a Holiday

It’s summer time and we all plan to be out in the yard more, fixing something to eat, whatever. We just would like to be more active.

North Country’s assistive technology loan closet can lend a hand. Let’s start in the kitchen since that’s always a good place to begin. Maybe you need some help cutting that pizza you bought for the kids and yourself. We have a nice pizza cutter you can try. If you are using spices for some of your dishes, we have the select-spice with 12 dispensing units on a swivel base. If you have difficulty getting that jar open, we have the Jar Pop Jar Key. This device will open jars with smooth lids. Our jar and bottle holder will keep a bottle in place while you open it.

Most of us use a microwave. Some of us need them to live. Whatever your ability, we have the large micro cooker for you to try. This device is customized for microwave cooking with vented lids that double as a strainer. It has dual handles for easy lifting and serving.

We haven’t made it to the yard yet and haven’t gone fishing. Maybe we can help with your outdoor plans in our next issue. North Country doesn’t have any of these items for sale, but for you to try out first. Wistech and the National Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), U.S Department of Education, help to make our loan closet possible.

Let us know what you would like to try. We have a lot of other items that we didn’t have space to mention today. Call us in either our Superior or Ashland office.

Working At Home, Telework Can Help

Working from home is being done by more people these days. Being able to work in the comfort of our homes is attractive for a lot of people.

People with disabilities want to work, but getting back and forth is a barrier for them. Telework is designed to help remove this barrier. Telework allows people with disabilities to take out a low interest loan (5%) to purchase the equipment they may need to set up a home office or make accessibility improvements so they can work at home. Computers, printers, software, scanners, faxes, tools and equipment, office furniture and much more might be covered by the Telework program.

If you want to increase your income with a current job by working at home, you might want to consider a loan under Telework to get things started. You may just want to work from home to accommodate your disability or you may want to start a home business with help of a loan from Telework. If you are starting or expanding a home-based business, you will need to have a business plan approved as part of the loan.

You can apply for a loan if you have a poor credit history, but, like a WisLoan, you need to show you have income to make repayments. Loans are between \$500 and \$50,000.

If you are considering a Telework loan and want to find out more, contact us at our office in Superior or Ashland. All eight Independent Living Centers in Wisconsin are participating in Telework and the WisLoan program.

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.



Contact North Country Independent Living for assistance with the WisLoan or Telework Loan Programs at 800-924-1220 v/tty in Superior or 800-499-5676 v/tty in Ashland

A WisLoan Might Provide the Funding You Need

If you are planning on making changes to your home to make it more accessible, A WisLoan could help you get started. You might want to build a ramp, put in a roll-in shower, widen door ways or add a stair lift or make that kitchen more accessible.

WisLoan is a low interest loan program designed for people with disabilities and their families to provide the home modifications and technology to increase independence. Individuals have used WisLoans to also purchase vans with lifts, hand controls, computers with special adaptations, and much more.

Loans now are at 5%. People can take out a loan for as little as \$500 or as much as \$50,000. People with poor credit history can apply for a loan. However, you must show that you have income enough from work or other sources to repay the loan you need. Family members or others can take out a loan for a person with a disability. However, the assistive device or modification must be used by the consumer.

Applications are completed in person. If you would like to find out more about WisLoan, contact North Country in either our Superior or Ashland office. It's a great program; why not give it a try.

WisLoan is a federally –funded project of the National Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) and the U.S Dept. of Education.



Help Explain Traumatic Brain Injury

The Baylor College of Medicine is inviting people with brain injury, their friends and family members to help others better understand TBI. Adults with TBI and others who are at least 13 years old are invited to participate in a one-hour group discussion over the phone. You will receive \$20 for participating.

The goal of this effort is to help our communities know more about TBI. The Rehabilitation Research and Training Center at Baylor is developing educational materials and would like those with a brain injury, their family and friends to offer suggestions on what should be included. What helped you after your brain injury? What information did your family and friends find helpful?

For more information, contact Terri Hudler-Hull at 1-800-734-8590. e-mail: hullt@tirr.tmc.edu.

Social Security and Working

Scott Anderson, Benefits Specialist

Social Security wants you to work. If you are on SSDI or SSI, Social Security has several employment supports that allow you to test your ability to work and retain some or all of your benefits, including your health care coverage. Trial Work Period, Extended Period of Eligibility, Continuation of Medicare Coverage, Impairment Related Work Expenses, Earned Income Exclusion and Student Earned Income Exclusion are just a few of the Employment Supports available to beneficiaries. Many people on benefits fear losing their check by working, but by utilizing these supports, most people can continue to receive some if not all of their benefits. This includes both Medicare and Medicaid benefits.

The Dept. of Health and Family Services also has programs to assist persons with disabilities to work. The Health and Employment Counseling program and the Medicaid Purchase Plan are two programs that allow someone who is working or looking to work to have access to Medicaid.

The state of Wisconsin is also a test state for the new SSDI Employment Pilot demonstration project that allows an SSDI recipient to keep more of their SSDI even with higher earnings. Enrolling in this program cannot only benefit you as an individual, but, if successful, will benefit persons with disabilities nation-wide. Interested persons must be enrolled in the SSDI Employment Pilot by July 31st, 2006. If you are interested in finding out more about this project or any of the above mentioned employment supports, contact: Scott Anderson, Benefits Specialist at North Country: 715-392-9118, V/TTY or 1-800-924-1220, V/TTY or by e-mail to Scott Anderson at ncilscott@superior-nfp.org.

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

Board of Directors

Gayle Wahner, Superior
Tom Draghi, Hayward
Ben Barrett, Trego
Paul Zahurance, Saron
Johnilee Nyberg, Minong
Mary Jane Grande, Ashland
Justin Nicoletti, Herbster

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**Superior Main Office**

2231 Catlin Avenue, Suite 16  
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**www.northcountryil.com**  
**Email: [ncil@superior-nfp.org](mailto:ncil@superior-nfp.org)**

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ALTERNATE FORMATS AVAILABLE

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