

NORTH COUNTRY NEWS

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Try Our WisLoan Program

You need to get in and out of your home to go shopping or to get to work. A ramp would be helpful, but how do you pay for it? You are having difficulty getting into your tub and you are concerned you might fall. A roll-in shower would be quite helpful, especially if you could add a few well-placed grab bars. You would like to drive to places yourself, but you need a van with a lift and hand controls.

North Country Independent Living can help you look for funding to help pay for each of these assistive devices and modifications. One program you might want to consider is the WisLoan Program. This low-interest loan program is designed for people with disabilities and their families to help them get the equipment or accessibility improvements they need to increase their independence.

To apply for a WisLoan you need to be a Wisconsin resident with a disability. You can apply yourself or a family member can apply on your behalf. The current interest rate is 6.5 percent. North Country helps with the application in person at no cost.

Wheelchairs, scooters, hearing aids, visual aids and computers with modifications are some of the assistive technology that can be purchased with a WisLoan. Ramps and home accessibility modifications, including widening doorways can be funded with a WisLoan.

If you would like to find out more about WisLoan, call North Country in Superior or our Ashland office. WisLoan is a federally-funded project of the National Institute for Disability (NIDRR), and the U.S. Dept. of Education.

Consumer Happy With CapTel Phone

Glen Skifstad says when people would call him asking to talk with one of his two daughters, he wasn't sure who they wanted. Glen has a significant hearing loss and he says he often was confused, since his daughters have names that sound similar on the phone.

Now that Glen is using a CapTel phone, he sees what people are saying. "It has opened up doors that I haven't had opened for a long time," Glen says. For people with significant hearing loss, a CapTel phone displays what people are saying right on the front of the phone. Glen says it has made using the phone a lot easier for him. He is even able to save messages.

Glen purchased his CapTel with a TEPP voucher. North Country helped Glen apply for his voucher and assisted with helping him decide what type of phone would work best for him. TEPP is the Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program. This program offers a variety of vouchers so people can obtain phones or phone-related equipment. In addition to hearing

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Consumer Happy With CapTel Phone

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loss, people with speech disabilities and physical disabilities can obtain a voucher to help them communicate more effectively with the phone.

Money for the TEPP comes from the Universal Service Fund which we all pay into as part of our phone bill. In addition to the CapTel phone, Glen was able to purchase an alert system so that when the phone rings, a lamp will flash. All the assistive technology provided with a TEPP voucher must be related to using the phone.

If you would like to find out more about TEPP vouchers and the devices they cover, call North Country in Superior or our Ashland office. You can also send an e-mail to TEPP@Wipfli.com.

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.

Open Letter to Parents and Guardians Of People With Developmental Disabilities

(The following is a portion of a letter received from Jeff Kieffer of Price County. Portions of the letter were edited because of limited space).

The state of Wisconsin is in the process of redesigning the long-term care programs that most likely serve your family. The intention of this redesign is to increase the efficiency of the services and to eliminate waiting lists. Included are three areas of service within each of the Counties' Human Service Departments. These are: long term care for the frail elderly, those with physical disabilities, and those with developmental disabilities. The 11 counties in the northwest corner of the state have joined together to develop a plan for serving consumers under the redesign. This planning committee is called the Northwest Long Term Care Options Consortium.

I have been appointed to this redesign team as a representative for consumers with developmental disabilities. My daughter, Amber, has a developmental disability.

The purpose of this letter is to let you know that you have representation on this committee. So far I have been pleased with the focus on maintaining or improving services that are currently provided. However, if during the implementation phase these efforts are not maintained, I want to be able to report to you any weaknesses that have occurred.

I would like you to contact me about your concerns for Long Term Care redesign, if you have a son or a daughter with a developmental disability.

Jeff Kieffer
W 8 393 Sykora Rd
Catawaba, WI 54515
715-339-4223
jkieffer@pctcnet.net

Community Choice Act of 2007

People with disabilities need services to live in their homes and communities. People in the Disability Community have been advocating for this kind of legislation for several years now. We have another chance to act.

The new bill is called Community Choice. It was introduced by Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa in March. Community Choice would allow Medicaid to pay for community-based services for people with disabilities so that they can remain in their home. Traditionally, the Medicaid program has had an institutional bias when paying for services. Ask your Senator or Congressman to become a co-sponsor of this urgently needed legislation. Call 1-800-962-3524 and tell your lawmaker that hearings on this bill are needed now.

Medicare Premium Assistance

Wisconsin Medicaid may be able to help pay for certain Medicare costs if you request and qualify for Medicare Premium Assistance. In order to qualify for this program you must have low income and limited assets. There are three potential benefits to this program:

- * Medicaid may pay your Medicare Part A premium.
- * Medicaid may pay your Medicare Part B premium.
- * Medicaid may pay your Medicare cost sharing expense, such as deductibles and co-insurance.

There are four categories of eligibility. To be eligible you must meet the criteria outlined in the one of the four categories below:

Qualified Medicare Beneficiary (QMB);

- * Are entitled to Medicare Part A.
- * Have assets under \$4000.00 per individual or \$6,000.00 for a couple.
- * Have monthly income after certain deductions below the Federal Poverty Level. (FPL for 2007 is \$850.83 for an individual, \$1140.83 for a couple).

Specified Low Income Medicare Beneficiary (SLMB)

- * Receiving Medicare Part A.
- * Have assets under \$4000.00 per individual or \$6,000.00 for a couple.
- * Have monthly income after certain deductions between 100% and 120% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Specified Low Income Beneficiary Plus (SLMB+)

- * Receiving Medicare Part A.
- * Have assets under \$4000.00 per individual or \$6,000.00 for a couple.
- * Have monthly income after certain deductions between 120% and 135% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Qualified Disabled and Working Individual (QDWI);

- * Are entitled to Medicare Part A,
- * Have assets under \$4000.00 per individual or \$6,000.00 for a couple,
- * Have monthly income after certain deductions that is less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.

For more information on the Medicare Premium Assistance Program or to find out if you are eligible, contact your local county/tribal human service agency.

The Benefits of Disability Inclusion in AMERICORPS

"What I gave came back tenfold... I was finally able to give back some of the love and nurturing that I got as a child." - National service member with a disability.

"Because of her disability, I adjusted the format of our team meetings to fit her learning style. This not only helped her follow along, but it significantly increased the functionality and efficiency of our meetings. Everyone benefited from what started as an accommodation." -AmeriCorps*NCCC team leader.

Many individuals with disabilities have had the opportunity to actively participate in national service.

This participation has had a positive impact, not only on the communities where they were serving, but also on themselves and national service as a whole.

If you're interested in more information contact Becky Manuel at 800-620-8307 or Email: manuer@dhfs.state.wi.us

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Calendar of Events

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

June 5, 12-2 p.m. Pathways to Independence Listening Session. WITC-Ashland, 2100 Beaser Ave., Room 311. Come share your ideas about disability and employment. Talk about your priorities for potential grant funding in 2008. A second session will be held on **June 6, 2-4 p.m.**, Sawyer County Courthouse, 1610 Main street, assembly Room.

June 9, 7 a.m. 12th Annual Walleye Tournament. Fish Lake north of Duluth. Designed for anglers who have physical or visual disabilities. Prizes, food and camping available. Call Charlie Wittwer at 218-726-4762 for information.

June 19, Assistive Technology Fair, 9:30-4:30 at WITC-Superior. Vendors will be on hand to demonstrate devices to make your life easier. For more information, contact Dee at North Country in our Superior office. If you need special accommodations such as an interpreter, call Cheryl at 392-9118, 800-924-1220 v/tty or e-mail Cheryl at ncilcheryl@superior-nfp.org.

June 21, Housing Discrimination: How it Affects Your Bottom Line. This training will be held from 8:30 to 3:30 at UWS Rothwell Center at Belknap & Catlin in Superior. Housing professionals, landlords, and service providers are invited. You will learn who is protected under Federal and State law, and other topics related to housing discrimination. Registration fee is \$60 before June 1 and \$75 after June 1. Pick up a brochure at either North Country office. Call Sherry at 218-393-2234 if you need materials in a different format or other accommodations.

First Monday of each month, Northwest Long Term Care Options Consortium, Ramada Inn, Hayward, 10290 Hwy 27 south and County road B, 9-3. Open to the public. For more information, visit their web site: www.nw-ltco.org

Technology Corner

Wanted: A used lift chair. Call Tom, 715-373-2236.

For sale: 91 Chevrolet conversion van, 2500 series, ¾ ton. Includes lift. Engine recently overhauled. Has new brakes. Excellent condition. Asking \$3,500 or best offer. Call Skip, 715-774-3641.

The Community Relocation Initiative, It Can Help You Move Back Home

"We all want to choose where we live. Many people living in nursing homes want to return home. Community Relocation may be able to help you do that. This program is for people who are in a nursing home and are expected to stay long term, are 65 or older or have a physical disability. Also, your care must be covered by Wisconsin Medicaid (MA) and you have need for long term care.

Under the relocation program, you may be able to move to an assisted living environment or return back home and still receive the services you need. Community Relocation gives people with disabilities a choice of where they will receive their long term care.

If you are interested in this program, contact your nursing home social worker and tell them you want help getting back home. You can also contact your county or tribal human services department for assistance.

WorkSource Wisconsin

A new initiative in Wisconsin is aimed at supplying employers with access to information regarding the employment of individuals with disabilities. It provides technical assistance and on-going supports for employers who might be interested in, or already successfully employ and accommodate, people with disabilities.

WorkSource Wisconsin is a resource to provide easy access to the information necessary to actively recruit, hire, and retain employees with disabilities amidst the changing needs in today's workforce. This project of University of Wisconsin-Stout and the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) provides a website of employer specific information and resources as well as access to technical assistance and upcoming training opportunities.

The website was just launched in March and is accessible at www.worksourcewi.com. Project staff person, Charlie George, can also be reached at 1.866.460.9602 v/tty; or employmentspecialist@worksourcewi.com (info. taken from Worksource Wisconsin)



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 at 2 p.m. 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 at Memorial Medical Center, Ashland from 1-2 p.m. For more information, Call Stewart in Ashland.

Women's Peer Support Group, meets the third Tuesday of the month at 10:30 to noon and 6-7 p.m. at North Country, Superior. Call Gloria in Superior for more information.

Youth Leadership Club, for high school students grades 10-12. Meetings are held in the Superior office of North Country Independent Living. Call Gloria in Superior for information.

Chronic Pain Support Group, meets the third Wednesday of the month from 1-2:30 at the Goslin Court main building on Summit Street, Spooner. Contact Sharon at 635-9722 or Sue at 635-9138 for more information.

Telework Loan Program, A Success Story

Wisconsin's Telework Loan Program has helped an Ashland businessman get his taxidermy business up and running. Sean Zifko in April was approved for a loan from Telework to purchase a laptop computer and other office equipment so that he can get his new business started.

Telework is a low interest loan program designed for people with disabilities to make it easier for them to work from home. Printers, copiers, office furniture, computers and tools and equipment are some examples of what can be purchased with a Telework Loan. The current interest rate is 6.5 percent. The goal of the Telework Program is to assist a consumer to obtain employment by working at home or keep their current employment by working from home or another remote site.

If a consumer has an existing business or wants to start a business, a business plan is required as part of the Telework application. Consumers can borrow from \$500 to \$50,000. If an applicant has poor credit or bankruptcy, their application is still considered. The focus is on a person's ability to repay their loan.

What often works best is a cooperative effort between the consumer and other agencies in the community. In Sean's case, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in Ashland provided assistance in revising Sean's business plan and in purchasing needed equipment. Ashland County Health and Human Services and Pathway LLC provided ongoing support to Sean and North Country Independent Living assisted in completing the application.

Telework is a cooperative program between all eight independent living centers in Wisconsin. Our goal is to assist consumers in using a Telework loan to increase their income and their independence. If you would like to find out more, contact North Country in Superior or our Ashland office.

Telework is made possible through a grant from Rehabilitation Services Administration, authorized by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and implemented by the Dept. of Workforce Development. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation received the grant and provides program and fiscal oversight.

New Addition to NCIL Lending Library

North Country has just purchased a new item as part of our assistive technology demonstration project. The pocket sized "Speak and Read" is a portable voice-carry-over (VCO) device. It can be used on a desk phone or portable phone at home or even on some cell phones. It allows the caller to get a printed text display of what the person on the other end of the line is says, through the use of the telecommunications relay service. Call our office in Superior if you are interested in finding out more about this device.

North Country's loan closet is a program that is part of the Wistech network of Device Loan and Device Demonstration programs. Wistech is funded through a federal grant, administered by the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services.

Assistive Technology Fair

An assistive technology fair will be held at **WITC in Superior on June 19th, from 9:30 – 4:30**. Vendors will be on hand to demonstrate equipment and devices that can assist you to make your life easier. Presentations will be conducted throughout the day on topics such as adaptive recreation, accommodations for learning disabilities, specialized telephone equipment, adaptive transportation, funding options and others. Interpreters and personal care attendants will be on hand throughout the day. For other accommodation requests or for more information, please contact Dee at the Superior office of NCIL.

Transportation Update

North Country's Successful Transportation Voucher program is ending.

North Country thanks the Duluth/Superior Community Foundation and the United Way in helping get our transportation voucher program going in Douglas and Bayfield Counties. Their generosity helped get this needed service running.

People with disabilities used vouchers to travel to work, social events, medical appointments, and to go shopping. Consumers traveled over 2,800 miles in the two months vouchers were available. Friends, neighbors, family members, taxi services, and agency vans provided the transportation for consumers.

The transportation voucher program was a new initiative offered by North Country. While we can no longer take applications for this program, we hope to offer it again in the future. The key to success to a transportation voucher program or other efforts like this is collaboration between everyone in our eight county area. The Duluth/Superior Community Foundation and the United Way stepped forward and helped make this voucher program happen.

Planning efforts between all eight counties in our region are ongoing to coordinate transportation services throughout our region. Keep reading North Country News for the latest updates.

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 \$ _____

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2231 Catlin Ave. Suite 16
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Superior Main Office
2231 Catlin Avenue, Suite 16
Superior, WI 54880
(715) 392-9118 Voice
(715) 392-9271 TTY
1-800-924-1220 V/TTY
TTY Message Line (ext. 23)
Visit us on the web at
www.northcountryil.com
Email: ncil@superior-nfp.org

John Nousaine
Director
nciljohn@superior-nfp.org

Dee Truhn
Assistant Director
ncildee@superior-nfp.org

Nickoel Anderson
Accountant
ncilnick@superior-nfp.org

Cheryl Stevens
Office Assistant
ncilcheryl@superior-nfp.org

Gloria Hakkila-Johnson
Independent Living Specialist
ncilgloria@superior-nfp.org

Gail Pearson
Independent Living Specialist
ncilgail@superior-nfp.org

Scott Anderson
Benefits Specialist
ncilscott@superior-nfp.org

Bob Olsgard
Transportation Coordinator
ncilbob@superior-nfp.org



Ashland Branch Office
422 West Third Street, Suite 114
Ashland, WI 54806
(715) 682-5676 V/TTY
1-800-499-5676 V/TTY

John R. Nedden-Durst
Disability Navigator
nciljnd@superior-nfp.org

Stewart Holman
Independent Living Specialist
ncilstew@charterinternet.com.

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