

FYI

Fargo – Freedom In Action Planting Succulents

June 21, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Freedom Resource Center
Call Abbey by June 11

Patriotic Wreath

July 19, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Freedom Resource Center
Call Diane to register by July 12

Jamestown – Patriotic Wreath

June 14, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Legacy Place, 419 5th St. NE
Call Beth 701-252-4693

Picnic and Rock Painting

July 19, 11:30 - 2:00 p.m.

502 15th St. SE-McElroy Park

Design your own journal

July 10, 17 and 24, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

233 Central Ave. N.
The Vault in Valley City

Lisbon – Patriotic Wreath

June 15, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Freedom Resource Center, 701 Main St.
Call Pam 701-683-6850 by June 11

Moorhead – Vision Boards

June 21, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Freedom Resource Center,
1132 28th Ave. So. Ste. 105A
Call Tiffany 218-512-1101

Dinner and Hello, Dolly-Trollwood Play

July 26, Dinner at 6 p.m.

Doors open at 7:30 p.m.

Art of Freedom

October 4, 2018, 5-7:30 p.m.

Rhonda Harris Takes Control of Her Life



Rhonda Harris

For Rhonda Harris, the path toward taking control of her life has been very difficult. Through humility, perseverance, and some help along the way,

she made it. It continues to be a daily challenge, but she is meeting it.

Harris, 45, of Fargo, explains her childhood as a struggle with self-image. She never felt good enough, pretty enough, smart enough, or that she had any self-worth. She did all sorts of destructive things in order to try and be liked.

At one point, Rhonda had been quite successful. She was the employees committee chair at Blue Cross Blue Shield. She was involved in several activities such as bowling, volleyball, and dart leagues. She was president of the Jaycees.

However, things eventually unraveled.

Her father took out a credit card in her name and charged about \$30,000. Rhonda felt obligated to pay this off, so decided to try and make it back at the casino. She went there every day after work and got back to Fargo in time to go to her job. She slept during her lunch hour.

Eventually, this caught up to her and she was no longer able to perform her job up to standard. She was referred to the Employee Assistance Program, and a psychiatrist. Things got worse from there. She spent time at the State Hospital in Jamestown. At one point she was taking up to 31 different psychotropic medications. She found herself without her legal rights, a driver's license, or a job. Her relationship with family had been destroyed.

Finally, through complete humility, she let go. She reached out to two people from her church. They encouraged her to contact Dawn and Lisa at Lutheran Social Services. They helped guide Rhonda through the skills she already knew about, but needed to start using to get control of her life.

continued on page 2

What's Inside

» From Where I Sit

» Appreciation Luncheon

» What's Wrong With This Picture

» Retirement

continued from page 1

They, in turn, referred her to Cindy at Freedom. Together, Rhonda and Cindy researched what it would take for her to get her legal rights back. They studied the rules and process, and decided a course of action. Through weekly meetings, Rhonda was able to move forward with her plan and advocate for herself. Rhonda is proud to say that on November 6, 2017, the judge granted that her guardianship be lifted and all her legal rights restored. She got 14 different letters of support. She said the judge actually clapped and congratulated her for her accomplishment. It was one of the proudest days of her life.

Through all this, Rhonda learned several lessons. "It's about being with healthy people, and doing positive things day in and day out," she said. Rhonda has several goals in place to help her stay successful and independent. First, she wants to take care of her physical health so she can work long term. Second, she has a vision board with positive quotes and a picture of Hawaii, a place she wants to go someday. The third goal is a positive relationship with her family. Next, she wants to be an advocate with other people with mental health issues. Finally, she wants to be more careful and selective in relationships she cultivates with others. Rhonda shared her story with the audience at Freedom's recent appreciation luncheon. Thank you, and congratulations Rhonda!



NDSU Blue Key Honor Society

From Where I Sit

A few random thoughts: It appears that summer has arrived. That's a good thing. This past winter seemed particularly long and cold. One of the things I think unites many people with disabilities is isolation. Winter makes that more challenging. Summer brings the freedom to go out and be with people. I went to the first HOPE, Inc. softball practice last night. It was great to be with everyone in the great outdoors.

On May 8 we had our annual appreciation luncheon. This is always a rewarding experience for me, as I get to see a lot of friends and hear some great stories of people accomplishing their goals in life and helping us achieve our mission of equality and inclusion for people with disabilities. If you listen carefully, you realize that some people have really been through a lot and have managed to accomplish great things despite many obstacles.

Funding is always a challenge. We were hopeful that we might get some additional money from the Minnesota Legislature. However, that did not happen. We will try again next year. There are still a number of counties in both states where we cannot provide the full array of services because we don't have the staff.

Speaking of staff, Mark Bourdon is retiring after over 14 years as Freedom's Program Director. He says when he started he had no intention of staying that long. Funny how life works out. When I first got my job at Freedom over 22 years ago, he was one of the first executive directors I met. He was in charge of FirstLink at the time. We



Nate Aalgaard,
Executive Director

were just talking the other day about the institutional memory of an organization. Now I am by far the longest-serving person at Freedom. There are a lot of stories to be told. The most important thing is to make sure we keep our eye on the prize of independence and freedom of choice for people with disabilities. I'd like to thank Mark for all his years of service to Freedom, and to me personally.

Not long ago I was introduced to the concept that some people are connectors. They seem to know everyone who has specific talents, interests, or can just simply get things done. One of those people started out at Freedom as a communication intern with me in 2015. That person is Alex Cyusa, and now he is a member of our Board of Directors. Because of his connections and his work with the Blue Key Honor Society at NDSU, Freedom received a generous donation at our luncheon. He is building connections in the community that will help us become better known and serve more people. We need more connectors out there like Alex.

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7th Annual Appreciation Luncheon

Freedom Resource Center held its 7th Annual Appreciation Luncheon on May 8, 2018. Eight award recipients were recognized: **Volunteer of the Year:** Mary Smith; **Peer Mentor of the Year:** Dan Holte; **Advocate of the Year:**

Deanna Pinnow; **Youth Advocate of the Year:** Dylan Riehm; **Accessibility Award:** Arby's FM Restaurants; **Employer of the Year:** Solid Comfort; **Distinguished Service Award:** HERO Inc.; and the **Larry Chial Leadership Award:** Erik Hatch



Volunteer of the Year: MARY SMITH



Accessibility Award: FM ARBY'S RESTAURANTS



Youth Advocate of the Year: DYLAN RIEHM



Peer Mentor of the Year: DAN HOLTE



Advocate of the Year: DEANNA PINNOW



**Distinguished Service Award: HERO INC.
(GEORGIA DUFAULT)**



Employer of the Year: SOLID COMFORT



Larry Chial Leadership Award: ERIK HATCH

The Appreciation Luncheon was made possible in part by the following **Platinum Sponsors:** Dakota Medical Foundation. Marco. **Gold Sponsors:** West Acres. **Silver Sponsors:** Bell Bank,

Stamart, Bert's Truck Equipment of Fargo Moorhead, CARR-AGRA (Lisbon), AFLAC, Metro Area Mayors Committee for People with Disabilities, Westwood Management (Wahpeton).



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What’s Wrong With This Picture?

The “ADA ramp” at a local hotel/convention center. The platform is 16” high. The ramp is composed of a 4’X8’ sheet of plywood with a 1’ long metal extension on the left-hand side. If a person stands on the metal extension, it flexes and the center of the metal nearly touches the floor.

Features of this ramp that are ADA compliant: 1) width – this ramp is 48” wide, ADA requires a 36” wide ramp. The width of the metal extension was not measured. It may be less than 36”. 2) the ramp is smooth. 3) cross slope – This ramp has less than 2% cross slope.

Features of this ramp that are not ADA compliant. 1) slope – ADA requires a ramp to go out 1 foot for every 1 inch up. To be compliant, the ramp would need to be 16 feet long. 2) handrails – ADA requires handrails on both sides of the

ramp. The handrails need to extend 1 foot beyond the top and bottom of the ramp. 3) edge protection – ADA requires edge projection on both sides of a ramp or 12” of extension beyond the handrails. 4) slip resistant – The painted plywood can be slippery, especially if a liquid was spilled on the ramp. 5) firm – ADA requires ramps to be firm. The metal extension flexes as a wheelchair proceeds up the ramp. This also causes this section of the ramp to be even steeper.

Retired from the Freedom Resource Center Board of Directors – 6 years on the Board, including 2 years as the Board Secretary

Recognized for 14 years of service to Freedom Resource Center and retirement beginning June 6.



Monica Haugen



Mark Bourdon