



DAKOTA CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

# Dakota Challenger

## 65th State Legislative Session

The 65th Session of the ND State Legislature began on January 3, 2017. While there are many important bills to make decisions on, we at DCIL are diligently watching those bills that pertain to and will effect persons with disabilities. We have had several of our consumers testify before some of the committees. (Tonia and Candy, active at our center, have both given testimony. You will find one of Tonia’s testimonies on page 3 of this newsletter)

At DCIL, one of our greatest goals is to help people with disabilities to learn to advocate for themselves and this is a great way that they can demonstrate whether or not we are



succeeding in this aspect of our agency. The House and Senate have gotten to the crossover period now and have begun hearing testimony again. The session will be complete after the 80 day period



which wraps up on May 1st. The bill to create a Brain Injury Advisory Council in ND passed the Senate. We are very thankful to everyone who supported the bill. We are especially thankful to Senator Mathern and Rep. Anderson for their work on this bill.

### Mission Statement:

The Dakota Center for Independent Living believes in self-determination for people with disabilities and helps to create the environment in which it is achieved.

“The contents of this newsletter were developed under a grant from the Department of Human Services. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Human Services, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.”



# Testimony From Tonia

Hello Chairman Holmberg and Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. My name is Tonia Johnston and I am here today on behalf of The Dakota Center for Independent Living and House Bill 1012. I have been with The Dakota Center for Independent Living, or DCIL for short, for the last 10 years. It is hard to put into such a short time frame all that they have done for me in these last 10 years, and how their help has helped to keep me independent and push me forward and find my voice I never knew I had. I am blessed to have Bipolar Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder and Parkinson's Disease. It can be quite a ride when you are not taking your medications, which I did not do for quite some time. I was diagnosed while I was in the Navy. I loved the Navy. You always knew where to find answers and what to do, what was going on for the most part and, if not, you could always find out. That is what DCIL is like. You can go to them to find answer. It is one place to find the answers to all your questions instead of getting the run around. With a physical disability sometimes you can easily see what a person might need, so they can function in life a little easier. When it comes to a mental disability that you cannot see, it is not as easy to know what you need. Having places like DCIL, they can help you figure these things out. Sometimes I have an idea in my head, but I am not sure how to find out about it or what it is exactly; and they will help me find it. They have found me a medication machine to help me keep track of my medications so I would not forget to take them. I had not even heard of that. They are always trying to find ways to make my life easier and help me feel like I am okay. I have to have them handle my money, which at first, was hard to accept. It made me feel very childish and they told me I could be as involved as I wanted to be. I am very stubborn and when I first started with them, I was hurt and angry so I wanted nothing to do with the bills. They made sure the bills were paid and that my spending money was sent to me so the kids and I could go and have some fun.

The problem is that I have felt very lost since I have been out of the Navy and trying to fight my mental illness was not helping. When I started at DCIL I was in a wheelchair because my legs did not cooperate from my Parkinson's Disease and my hands shook so bad I could not write with my right hand. People leave you because they do not understand, and that is okay. One of my sons at the time, drew me a picture and wrote on it that I was smart, I was brave and I was strong. I still look at it to this day. It has taken me all of these 10 years to finally figure out just what I needed to do to get myself back together. DCIL has helped me every step of the way.



I found a good therapist which everyone needs sometimes. I have a good psychiatrist and I am able to stay on my medication which is a different experience and can be hard, too. I have taken a more active role in my finances. They allow me to write my checks and they just sign them and I handle my grocery money and spending money. I had bought a home for the kids and me. I even taught myself to write left handed so when my right hand shakes too much, I can still write. I was able to get my college degree. It did take me longer to get it but I have to do things a little bit differently than some. That is okay. I have found I love to write and through DCIL, they have given me the opportunity to write on their blog and in their newsletter. I have also had chances to speak out about mental health, which I never thought I would do.

I have been blessed with these illnesses. Had I not been given them, I would never have been given some of these opportunities that I have been given. I get to write now and speak for people who cannot speak for themselves. I may have to do things in a different way, but that is Okay. If it were not for places like DCIL, people like me who have disabilities would not have hope for the future.



## WOMENS MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT GROUP

We are so happy to share that in March DCIL began a new Support Group. We will be gathering once a month. Please come and join us for a pleasant time of sharing, caring and supporting others that may be experiencing issues that you have or are currently dealing with. We will be meeting monthly for our Mental Health Support Group in Bismarck. Check our website calendar for future dates and time. [www.dakotacil.org](http://www.dakotacil.org) Call Ardeen with questions.



## Summer Fun and Safety

**DCIL will have a booth at the Bismarck Event Center for this event, held April 27th from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Contact Jeannie for questions.**

FUN  
AHEAD

**BLUE DIAGONAL  
STRIPES**

**ARE NOT PARKING SPOTS**



**THEY ARE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO GET IN & OUT OF THEIR VEHICLES**

**DAKOTA CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING 222-3636**

HAVE YOU SEEN OUR BILLBOARD ALONG BISMARCK EXPRESSWAY AND SOUTH 26TH STREET IN THE SLUMBERLAND PARKING LOT? WE ARE SO EXCITED ABOUT THIS CAMPAIGN! WE ARE HOPING THAT IT WILL HELP PEOPLE TO BE AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF SHOWING COMMON CURTESY TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES THAT NEED THE BLUE DIAGONAL LINES TO ENTER AND EXIT THEIR VEHICLES. IT BECOMES VERY INCONVENIENT WHEN THOSE INDIVIDUALS PARK IN A SPOT NEXT TO THE LINES AND THEN COME OUT ONLY TO FIND SOMEONE IS PARKED ILLEGALLY AND THEY CANNOT ENTER BACK INTO THEIR VEHICLE TO LEAVE. HELP US GET THE WORD OUT THERE, THAT THESE ARE NOT PARKING SPOTS AND SHOULDN'T BE USED AS SUCH.

## Success Story



### Success story for Brian

Imagine walking the streets, sleeping at a friend's place, when possible - or wherever there is a safe place and just surviving each day. This was the life of Brian.

Brian was referred to DCIL and needed assistance in applying for Medicaid, SNAP and housing. Brian was homeless. Due to Brian's disabilities, he finds it hard to be enclosed and needs the freedom to walk for miles. He walks to his appointments, to see his friends, or just to get away.

With the assistance of DCIL, Brian has Medicaid, SNAP and SSDI. He is now living in an apartment of his own, with the freedom to come and go as he wishes.

### BIG BARRIER REMOVED



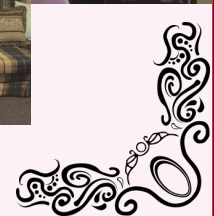
Jordan had taken The Drivers Ed course in 2013 and couldn't pass. Marlene did an intake and Jordan tested on the internet and written paper tests. He passed that same week.

**CONGRATULATIONS Jordan!!**



### 2017 Legislative Meet and Greet at DCIL

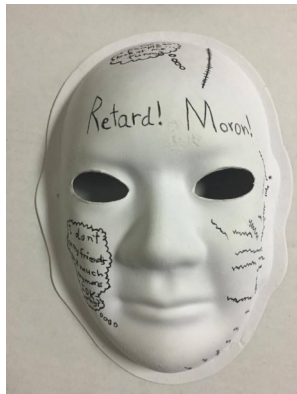
**On February 21, 2017, the Dakota Center for Independent Living Consumers and Staff hosted a Meet and Greet for the 65th North Dakota State Legislators. We would like to thank those that stopped by and took advantage of the opportunity to meet several of the people that DCIL serves. It was well attended and was very beneficial to all those that were involved.**



# UNMASKING BRAIN INJURY

**Have you ever taken the time to think about what it might feel like to deal daily with a brain injury? Here are some of our very own neighbors in the Bismarck area and how they see the disabilities they deal with daily from having a brain injury. They describe it through their masks. Put yourselves in their place just for a moment.**

**Will you look at them a little differently from now on?**

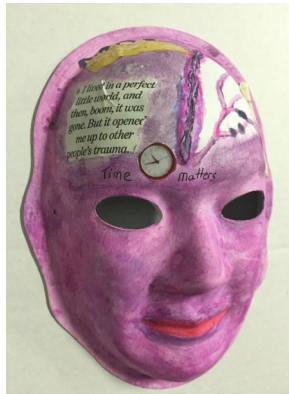


**Former Student**

Name: **Alexander Schroeder** City: **Bismarck, ND**  
 Brain Injury: **I was a passenger in a rollover car accident and was thrown out of the vehicle. I landed head first on the road. I received a TBI (traumatic brain injury) fractured pelvis, collapsed lung, bruised heart and lungs, fracture to my face and skull and almost lost my left eye.**

Explanation of Mask:

Life changed completely after my accident. I was a teenager and had to learn how to do everything all over again when I was recovering. I was 18 and would have been a senior in High School but missed my last year and graduating with my class. When I returned to school, I was treated terrible by the kids at school. I lost most of my friends because they really don't understand me. I have physical and cognitive difficulties. People called me a retard and a moron and they look at me funny all the time. I wish they would treat me better. I am still me inside. I feel broken sometimes.



**Former Occupation  
Retail Specialist**

Name: **Linda Faith** City: **Bismarck, ND**

Brain Injury:

In 2008 I found out that I had one brain aneurysm. The doctors said they would watch them. 4 months later I was going to have surgery on my back. Then they (doctors) said we have to send me to Minnesota to have the aneurysm clipped. The doctors did all kinds of tests. That's when they told me I had 3 aneurysms. So I had surgery Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

Explanation of Mask:

My mask has many scars. Not only me but many. My life now sometimes feels like knots in my head. Don't know if I am coming or going, but time does not matter. The brain surgery saved my life. The aneurysms are clipped. I am doing good, life is good.



**Former Occupation  
Computer Engineer**

Name: **Bill Carns** City: **Bismarck, ND**

Brain Injury:

Left frontal lobe damage due to multiple gunshot wounds with a .25 pistol in the fall of 1985.

Explanation of Mask:

Depiction of the gunshot wound to the left frontal lobe of the brain. Destroying many cognitive functions of my brain. Leaving me with paralysis and loss of short term memory.

“There is no greater disability in society, than the inability to see a person as more,” said Robert Hensel. Having a disability does not limit the potential of an individual. Rather than focusing on what they cannot do, focus on the things they can do and you will be surprised. There are things that people with disabilities might do differently, but that does not make them less than everyone else. There are seven billion people in the world and not one of them is the same. When I think about my friends with disabilities, I think about how we are more the same than different.

Disability is a matter of perception. There are many different kinds of disabilities including physical, emotional and intellectual disabilities. This only means that the abilities they have are different. My friends with disabilities want many of the same things that I do. No one should be defined by their disability, but instead should be accepted, included, and seen for who they really are. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and kindness. My sixth grade teacher always emphasized the importance of people first language and I have made it a habit to always use it. People first language puts the person before their disability. For example, you should say “she has a disability” rather than “the disabled girl.” Using language like “disabled” and “handicapped” is offensive and diminishes someone’s worth.

Spread the word to end the word. Words like the r-word (retarded) are used carelessly and are demeaning to others. Even if it is used with the intention not to hurt anyone, it makes people feel incompetent, dumb, and worthless. But, these individuals are so much more. They are intelligent, unique, and most importantly, they are able. It was so cool that our Bismarck High School (BHS) peer-to-peer class could create a video that made a difference to spread the word to end the word. The video went viral with over 300 shares reaching 57,000 people around the country.

There are many opportunities in our community for you to get to know some of these individuals, some being through the Designer Genes - Down Syndrome Awareness Group and volunteering for the Special Olympics. I volunteer for these organizations as well as spend time with these individuals through my peer-to-peer class at BHS. We hang-out together in school, at lunch and at high school games. It makes me so happy to see them included and enjoying activities that all teens enjoy. Every time I am around my friends, I am amazed at their abilities, their kindness and the joy they bring to my life. Their positivity makes my day! Building a friendship with someone with a disability not only makes an impact in their life, but will make a huge impact in yours as well.

Sydney Helgeson, Miss Bismarck’s Outstanding Teen 2017

<http://www.myndnow.com/news/bismarck-news/unmasked-north-dakotans-honor-brain-injury-awareness-month/669785095>



**North Dakota Brain Injury Network is pleased to launching the Know Your Noggin campaign.**

**They are very thankful to the individuals and family members who have shared their stories. Watch for their commercials airing now on local TV and radio stations.**

[www.ndbin.org/know-your-noggin](http://www.ndbin.org/know-your-noggin)

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DCIL has a satellite office in  
Dickinson, ND. They can be  
Reached at: 1-701-483-4363



## **IF YOU RIDE TRANSIT**

**You need to complete a new application prior to July 1, 2017, to qualify to continue using this mode of transportation.**

**Jeannie will be offering a class here at DCIL to help you get your application filled out on June 7th, from 5:30-7 p.m. She will hold another class on June 22nd, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. We will have these application forms available in our office and can help you at any time prior to July 1.**

**If you have questions, please contact Jeannie at 222-3636.**

**If you would like to receive the newsletter by e-mail,  
please contact**

**Vicki at DCIL by calling (701) 222-3636**