

Challenger

DAKOTA

Summer 2025

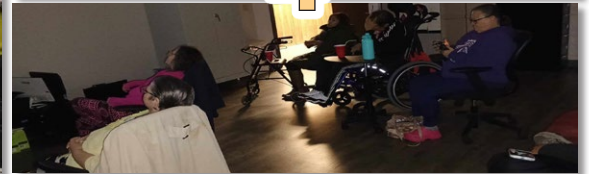
Dakota Center for Independent Living • www.dakotacil.org

"Serving people with disabilities since 1980"

DCIL appreciates consumers at May luncheon

The annual Consumer Appreciation luncheon was held at the Bismarck Eagles in May. DCIL had a camping theme complete with burgers and hotdogs for lunch, and followed the luncheon with trivia and bingo fun and lots of great prizes. Thank you consumers!





We loved seeing all the consumers come out for DCIL's social and rec events this past quarter!

Enjoying community and good friends is so important.

Above: 1) Bunny string art project in April. 2) Visiting the Garden Expo at the Bismarck Events Center in April. 3) Dinner at the Dream Center in May. 4) Smoothies & a movie at DCIL in May. 5) Wildflower seed paper art project late May. 6) Dakota Zoo excursion in June. 7) Consumer favorite in June - BINGO!

DiPietro comes on board as IL Advocate in May



DiPietro

My name is Caitlin DiPietro, and I started my role as an IL Advocate at DCIL on May 19th. I am a recent graduate of Colorado State University with my bachelor's degree in social work. I am originally from Colorado and moved out to Bismarck, North Dakota in May and will be working towards my master's degree in social work at the University of Mary starting in September. I have chosen to work for Dakota Center for Independent Living because I have a true passion for helping individuals with disabilities overcome any challenges that they may be facing in their everyday lives while empowering them to live independently. With this role, I will be able to help individuals reach their individual goals and help them be successful in life no matter what their disability is and what struggles they are facing.

I was born and raised in southern Colorado and grew up doing a variety of outdoor activities. I come from a very big family and have a very close relationship with all my family members. Outside of spending time with my family and boyfriend, I enjoy spending time with friends, going camping, paddle boarding, fishing and just spending time outside. I also enjoy binge watching a good tv series and laying low at my house or traveling and seeing new sights. No matter what it is, I like to keep busy and explore new places.

Throughout my life, I grew up playing and watching sports. I played softball and basketball from a young age all the way through high school. Growing up, I was surrounded by all sports through my family members and that is where my passion truly stemmed from. Not only do I enjoy playing sports, I also enjoy watching sports and tend to do a lot of that in my spare time. And of course, I am a huge Denver Broncos and Denver Nuggets fan.

U of Mary works with DCIL for intern Nelson

I'm Melanie but everyone calls me Mel. I attend the University of Mary majoring in Human Support Services with a minor in Psychology. I will obtain my degree after the summer. My hobbies include hiking, hanging out with friends, and I like to work. In the summer I play volleyball. The reason I chose this field is the wide range of things I can do to help better the community.



Nelson

NDTDPP approved by ND Legislature in '25

The NDTDPP grant has been approved by the ND Legislature to become a permanent grant program going forward. The current grant DCIL is working with is good through Oct. '25. The new grant will be effective Nov. '25. Exciting news as that program has helped so many individuals, it would have been hard to see it go away.

Herring hired as IL Advocate for Dickinson



Herring

My name is Jared Herring, a proud soon-to-be father of two and a newly appointed Independent Living Advocate with the Dakota Center for Independent Living (DCIL), where I began my journey on June 9, 2025.

I graduated from Mott-Regent High School in 2015 and earned my bachelor's degree from Dickinson State University in 2019. During college, I was honored to receive the Best Actor award in 2016 and Best Supporting Actor in 2017—moments that fueled my passion for expression and connection.

In February 2019, my wife and I embarked on an incredible adventure to Shenzhen, China, where we lived until the summer of 2021. A little over a year later, in November 2022, we welcomed our daughter into the world—an unforgettable milestone and the proudest moment of our lives.

Shortly after, we made the bold decision to relocate from North Dakota to Pittsburgh so my wife could pursue her doctorate, which she began in the spring of 2023. Now, two years later, we've returned to North Dakota to be closer to family and prepare for the arrival of our second child next month.

I'm excited to bring my determination, empathy, and peace of mind to the individuals and families I'll be supporting through DCIL. I look forward to making a meaningful impact in the lives of those I serve.

DCIL grateful for all the community support

We are so full of gratitude for all the support our community partners have shown us this past quarter! DCIL wishes to give a shout-out to these organizations for their generosity:

- Tommy's Carwash dedicated the entire month of April to uplift DCIL's mission by donating a portion of their #1 WORKS wash. Thank you Tommy's Carwash!
- The Bismarck Eagles sponsored our Consumer Appreciation luncheon in May by donating their event space and food, and were also very generous in contributing funds needed to establish the KIDS portion of our upcoming gardening program. The KIDS program will serve the youth of our population by offering a safe space for peer gatherings, while building both social and practical life skills through structured, supportive activities. The youth will benefit from peer support, academic skill development, independent living skills, arts/crafts, and interactive activities to encourage inclusion. We will promote learning and empowerment among youth who often face isolation or limited access to social programs. Thanks so much, Bismarck Eagles!
- The NDAD Gibbens Memorial chose DCIL as the recipient of their grant in May. Their generous grant will be used to build the ADA accessible raised garden bed for the upcoming DCIL gardening program which will reach a broader range of individuals with disabilities by offering new opportunities for engagement and skill-building. This program covers the benefits of gardening, nutrition, healthy eating, opportunities for physical activity, promote mental wellness, peer connection/interaction, and teach responsibility. We are so thankful to NDAD!

DCIL in the Community



Dream Center celebrates bday

Stephanie Scott, Mandy Kraft, Kianna Roecker, & Janie Wester of DCIL were on deck with games & giveaways for the Dream Center's 3rd birthday party in April. Happy birthday to this great community resource!

DCIL presented our services in Fort Yates

DCIL's Stephanie Scott, Miah Rauhauser, Caitlin DiPietro & Kianna Roecker enjoyed a day at White Buffalo Foods in Fort Yates with an Assistive Technology booth in June & also presented on DCIL's services at the event.



Just some good feels



Above on the left, Officer Johnson performing sobriety tests at Renew Ed during one of the drivers permit classes with a student.

Johnson has been a resource officer for 3 years of his 9+ years of service. We appreciate you helping at the DCIL drivers permit classes!

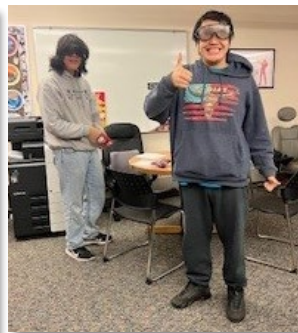


Tech support by DCIL staff at Liberty Heights in June

DCIL Advocates Miah Rauhauser (left), Andrew Hager, and Stephanie Scott visit local senior facilities monthly to assist individuals with technology such as cell phones, iPads, computers, & Smart TVs. This was the first time visiting Liberty Heights in Mandan.

Students complete drivers permit & budgeting courses

This spring, twenty-two Standing Rock students completed their drivers permit courses and budgeting classes. The students received completion certificates for each class. Way to go Standing Rock Warriors, we are so very proud of all your hard work!



Mental health the focus of "Doors to Success" conference

DCIL attended on June 3rd the Consumer Family Network (CFN) mental health conference. Our door prize winner was Lisa Swanson, Recovery Center Mgr. from the ND State Dept. of Health and Human Services. Congratulations, Lisa!

2025 Graduates

Congrats to our consumers who just graduated in May!

(Right: South Central grad)



Advocate Stephanie & her consumer Reginald are filled with joy after many of Reginald's personal goals were achieved. Reginald was recently baptized, has made huge life changes, and continues to look forward to the what the future holds for him with his positive outlook. Great job, Reginald, we support you!

DCIL in the Community

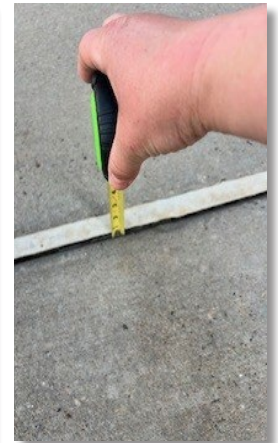
DCIL will do accessibility assessments at no charge

Dakota Center for Independent Living (DCIL) will do an accessibility assessment of your business and give ideas on how to make your business more accessible for people with disabilities, and it's free of charge across the 18 counties we serve.

Recently, assessments were done in western counties of our service area of the state. Photos to the right show some of the areas that are measured during assessment.



If you'd like an assessment done at your business, please contact Executive Director Royce Schultze at DCIL: 701-222-3636.

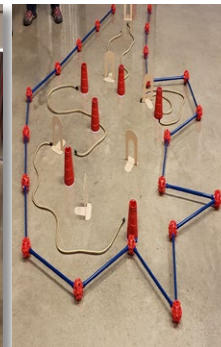
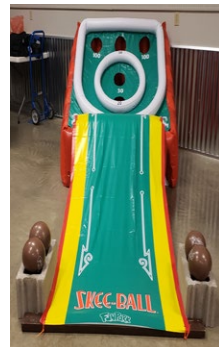


DCIL Dickinson in the Community

Family Fun Fair held for Nat'l Child Abuse Month

Mary Beth Hoffman of the Dickinson DCIL office and her assistant participated in the Family Fun Fair on May 1st at the 4 Seasons Pavilion in Bowman, ND.

This event was held during the National Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month to help celebrate children and families by having fun and getting valuable resources from several agencies in the state.



A blast at the beach during Dickinson's Health & Safety Fair

The Southwestern District Health Unit sponsored the 12th Annual Kids Health & Safety Fair on May 8th at the West River Ice Center in Dickinson, ND. Staff from the Dickinson DCIL and Bismarck DCIL dressed in their favorite beach attire and hosted an informational booth at the event.

The event was free for kids and families, complete with door prizes, educational activities, and more.

Dickinson's April Parent Fair Palooza celebrated Parents

The 2nd annual Parent Fair Palooza was held at the Dickinson High School Gym on April 5. This event celebrated parents and strong families today and tomorrow.

Dickinson DCIL's Mary Beth Hoffman and Bismarck DCIL's Kianna Roecker hosted an informational booth at the event to inform the public of DCIL's services.



Thomas can now access community services safely

by Kevin Bailly, IL Specialist

Thomas Olson started working with Dakota Center for Independent Living in April 2025. Thomas' referral came to DCIL from a Home & Community case manager as Thomas had open wounds to his foot which required him to have his foot elevated for the majority of the day. His current method was utilizing his recliner to elevate his foot to allow for proper healing.

This initial request for his referral was to obtain a new recliner for him as his was non-operational and he was in a financial situation due to loss of work where he could not afford a new chair. The North Dakota Transition and Diversion Program (NDTDP) assisted him with obtaining a new recliner.

The Transition Coordinator noticed Thomas' deck was about a foot lower than the level of his door to his home.

Thomas was using a makeshift step to gain access to the home and the steps to his home were too steep without accessibility support rails for safety.

Thomas worked with a Transition Coordinator to fill out a Rehabilitation Access Program (RAP) application. Thomas worked hard to get all the documentation necessary to complete the application. The application was approved and Richard Long, a general contractor for A Long Products, had completed the rebuild of his deck. The deck was built level with the doorway for easier access and had ADA compliant handrails installed. This new build now assists Thomas in ascending and descending stairs to access community services and other needs.

Thomas expressed his gratitude for the NDTDP as well as A Long Products for the completion of his new deck.



Thomas no longer has to fear a potential fall when he leaves his home with the deck now level with the front door. Thomas is excited he can finally access community services safely.

Family shows gratitude to DCIL IL Specialist Nagel

by Dee Dee Nagel, IL Specialist

A consumer of IL Specialist Dee Dee Nagel had a very supportive family member who texted their gratitude after her help, "Good evening. Just wanted to say thank you

again for helping us. That ramp is coming in handy. We use the ramp for going out of the house as with his knee issues and his kidney transplant challenges it's better than the 6 steps we have up front. Also coming in handy

to bring water in as he has to drink six to seven 16oz waters each day. We have to buy the water as we only have well water. Will keep in touch. Thank you again. Lot of traveling to Fargo for us. But we are very thankful."

Two agencies show their appreciation for Willows' help

by Cody Kurtz, MFP/TDP Director

1) I received an email from a ND Aging Services case manager regarding work McCallie did with one of her consumers through the NDTDP. Nice work McCallie. Keep shining!!

"I just have to thank you for being so on it with getting the consumer the items she needed. She prays for us twice a day. She is

so grateful for everything. They think a lot of you and thought I would pass it on!"

2) Received another email from one of the HCBS case managers we work with. Nice work McCallie!

"I just got off the phone with McCallie and what an amazing person she is! I have been so impressed with her, what a go getter. I love her spirit!"

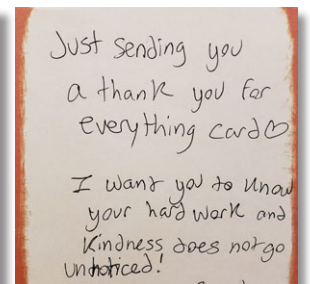
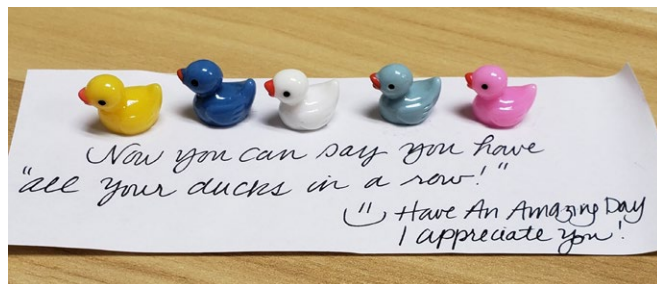
She has totally given a new life to LW in Washburn with all she has done for him. Now she finds his cat Buster a new home? Where can we get more McCallie's in this world?!

She made my day, what a great person. She is making such a difference for LW as he was destined for eviction.

I really love this TDP program, it makes such a difference for so many people."

Dickinson's Hoffman receives a cute thank you for her help

Johanna Pierce, a disabilities advocate from Williston stopped at DCIL in Dickinson after talking with Mary Beth Hoffman, DCIL's Branch Office Coordinator, about DCIL services and plans of what this office would do over the summer. Pierce also brought updated brochures, swag from P & A, and a nice gift for Mary Beth from an individual Mary Beth had helped. How nice!



Neighbors come to the rescue for much needed ramp

by McCallie Willows, IL Specialist

Editor's note: Even though Willows was going through the steps to help, this story is one about the community coming together to help someone in need, WOW!

I had been working with a woman who was also working with the Minot CIL. The woman was in the Bismarck hospital. She was not able to be discharged

from the hospital until a ramp was installed for her to get in and out of her home safely.

I was brought in to help with getting paperwork signed for RAP Grant, but I suggested we use the ramp that we had in our garage and that way we would not need RAP Grant funding. Her TC in Minot went out to her home to get the measure-

ments for me to see if the ramp we had would work and she was then informed that this woman's neighbors had come together and built her a brand-new ramp on their own.

She was now able to return to her home which she was very excited about.

What great neighbors to do that for her when she was in need!

Unusual accessible device made available to Geordan

by Laura Marsh, Dickinson IL Specialist

I worked with Geordan to get an unusual accessible device, a cross-trainer exercise bike that he can use without side effects due to his disability and get the exercise recommended by his doctor.

Geordan had tried several other agencies that help with assistive devices and equipment, but due to it not meeting the definition of an accessible device,

they could not fund the purchase. I also provided him with a needed medicine cabinet and Geordan is very happy and grateful for both.

I will continue to work with Geordan to identify any other needed accessible devices for the post transition period. I called a few weeks later to check in with Geordan. Geordan said the exercise machine is working great for him. I told him I was

happy we were able to help. Geordan said, "You not only helped, I feel like you saved my life. The doctor couldn't believe how well I am doing, I feel so great. My A1C is down, and I have lost 15 pounds. The bike is so easy to use, if your legs get tired, you use your arms more and switch back when needed."

I'm so glad I work with the Transition and Diversion Program (TDP). It continues to help people like this.

Mary's independence now allows her inclusiveness

by Kevin Bailly, IL Specialist

Mary Engesser started working with Dakota Center for Independent living on Dec 3rd, 2024.

Mary was diagnosed with severe fibromyalgia which limits her abilities to perform manual tasks and perform self-care. She is cared for by her Husband Bob Engesser. Mary was struggling to access community services as her accessibility ramp needed repairs to make it fully functional again. Mary had requested

assistance through the Transition and Diversion Program.

Richard Long, general contractor had met with Mary and Bob to identify the needs for the repair and agreed on the work. Mary's ramp repair was completed on March 8th, 2025.

Mary is now able to access community services without the fear of her accessibility ramp not being able to support the weight of Mary and her wheelchair. Additional anti-slip guards were also placed

on the accessibility ramp to improve traction/grip in the winter months as her accessibility ramp tends to become icy after freezing rain or snow. The icy ramp conditions impacted her ability to access community services and other social functions. With the repairs to her accessibility ramp Mary's level of independence is now much greater.

Mary's independence now allows her more inclusiveness when it comes to socialization in the Bismarck community.

Buster the cat finds his forever home with a little help

by McCallie Willows, IL Specialist

This is Buster the cat. Buster is a 10-yr-old, orange tabby cat who is playful, loves humans, and is very curious. Buster's owner (a consumer of McCallie's) could no longer take care of him and made the selfless decision to give Buster the life he needs and deserves. McCallie got this news on a Thurs. afternoon and needed to have Buster rehomed by Fri.

McCallie called shelters and foster homes from Bismarck/Mandan, Minot, Dickinson, and Fargo. DCIL Advocates Miah and Stephanie knew how time sensitive this was and helped by calling multiple people and posting Buster on social media. McCallie also

posted Buster on Bismarck to help get him a new foster or permanent home. Advocate Miah found Lynn through her mother and Lynn stated that she was looking for an older, orange, declawed cat. She had not seen Buster before she made her statement. Lynn has had cats in the past, but they have since passed. Lynn's husband passed in 2020, and she had just moved into a new home where she was feeling lonely. She saw Buster's picture and loved him immediately!

McCallie picked Buster up from his original home and brought him back to the office where staff got to have some much-needed pet therapy before her and Miah took him

to his new home. Lynn and Buster bonded almost immediately. He was very calm and curious about her and his new home. Miah and McCallie stayed with Lynn for a while to make sure

she had all the information she needed. Lynn is so happy that she now has Buster, and she is very excited to provide him the life he deserves for the last half of his life.





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

* DCIL offices are fragrance free.

What can we help you with?

DCIL Core Services:

- Information & Referral
- Peer Support
- Advocacy
- Independent Living Skills Training
- Transitional Services



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Mission Statement

The Dakota Center for Independent Living believes in empowering people with disabilities by minimizing barriers, advocating for inclusion and promoting consumer choice.

The contents of this newsletter were developed under a grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of HHSC or ACL, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. This newsletter is available in an alternative format - upon request.

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