

# Dakota Challenger

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"Serving people with disabilities since 1980"

## DCIL friends enjoyed Christmas cheer together

Social & Rec  
Dec. '25



### A letter from Santa (AKA: Advocate Andrew!):

On Tuesday, December 2nd, Dakota Center for Independent Living hosted a Christmas party for our consumers. It was a fun and festive evening with a lot of laughter and joy. Hot chocolate, coffee, cookies, bagels with cream cheese, and chips with dips were offered while attendees visited, played board games, watched holiday movies, and listened to holiday tunes.

*Thanks everyone for coming out on a cold night. You all make our hearts warm this holiday season. Enjoy your holiday season from DCIL!*



# October - Pumpkin Painting





## DCIL staff attend 31<sup>st</sup> annual April conference

In October, DCIL Program Director Kianna and Advocate Miah from our Bismarck office along with Dickinson Branch Office Manager Mary Beth attended the 31st annual April conference in beautiful Portland, OR.

This year's theme was "Empower your inner R.O.S.E -- Resilient, Out-

spoken, Steadfast, and Engaged.

*The Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) is a national grass roots, consumer controlled, nonprofit membership organization consisting of centers for independent living, their satellites and branch offices, statewide independent*

*living councils, other organizations and individuals concerned with the independent living issues of people with disabilities living in rural America.*

*APRIL is a national membership organization dedicated to advancing the rights and responsibilities of people with disabilities in rural America.*



### IL Specialist moves into Advocate role in Dec.

Jeanne has now moved into an open Advocate position at DCIL in December. Previously an IL Specialist for DCIL, Jeanne will now use her skills to assist consumers in the advocacy area.

Advocates help people solve daily challenges they are facing such as applying for benefits and finding community resources, securing accessible housing, arranging transportation, or getting employment. Congrats on the new role, Jeanne!



Jeanne



# Standing Rock Health Fair very welcoming

DCIL staff felt so welcomed at the Standing Rock Health Fair in October!

The students were great. A large group of them volunteered and helped all the presenters bring in their materials. The kids then went around and offered to get each of us water, coffee, and anything else we might need. They also went around and brought us lunch.

Some of the students there run

their own radio station. We were asked by some of the students if we could speak on their program and explain our services (right).

The student volunteers also helped with tear down. What a tremendous day with great conversations and meeting new friends!

Staff were also at other events this quarter such as the Missouri Slope Health Fair in November and other events mentioned below.



## Cross Disability panel sheds light on disabilities

DCIL consumers volunteered to sit on a panel about cross disabilities in November at BSC. Panelists shared stories of how they cope daily with their disabilities.

The Cross Disability panel occurs annually at various locations in our service area.



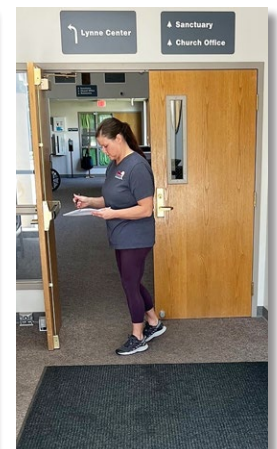
## DCIL will do accessibility assessments at no charge

Dakota Center for Independent Living (DCIL) will do an accessibility assessment of your business or polling site. We'll give you ideas on how to make your location 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 in 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 location, please contact Program Director Kianna Roecker at DCIL: 701-222-3636.



# Accommodations and the Holidays:

## *How flexibility and inclusion build stronger communities*

In November, Dakota Center's Program Director Kianna and Advocate Andrew presented DCIL's services

at a "Cookies & Community" event for the Arc of Bismarck.

The presentation was focused on

accommodations during the upcoming holiday season.

Tips from the presentation below:

### OVERVIEW OF ACCOMMODATIONS & THE HOLIDAYS

The holidays can be joyful, but they can also bring challenges for individuals with disabilities.

Our goal today is to explore how accommodations and inclusion can make the season accessible and meaningful for everyone.

### UNDERSTANDING ACCOMMODATIONS

What are accommodations?

Any modifications or adjustments to a job, work environment, or service that allow a person with a disability to participate equally.

Accommodations are more than flexibility—it is the ability to recognize barriers and adjust environments, traditions, and expectations to ensure equal participation and comfort for all.

### WHY ACCOMMODATIONS MATTER

- Accommodations ensures that everyone—regardless of disability—can participate fully in celebrations and traditions.
- We can adjust to unique needs and unexpected changes by:
  - Meeting consumers where they are.
  - Finding creative solutions to barriers (physical, social, or emotional.)
  - Helping manage schedule changes, support emotional well-being, and keep inclusion at the forefront.
- Inclusion isn't just kindness; it's equity and respect.
  - Create accessible events and gatherings for consumers.
  - Respect diverse traditions and needs.
  - Offer modified schedules and hybrid opportunities.
  - Promote emotional well-being and work-life balance.

### BARRIERS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES FACE

- Physical access issues (snow, steps, narrow pathways)
- Sensory overload from holiday lights or music
- Transportation challenges
- Social isolation and lack of inclusive invitations
- Financial stress or limits on accessible shopping and events

### CREATING INCLUSIVE HOLIDAY SPACES

- Use ADA-compliant accessible venues with clear pathways and seating.
- Offer quiet areas for those with sensory sensitivities.
- Provide captions or interpreters for events when possible.
- Communicate access details in invitations.
- Ask, rather than assume, what someone needs.

### HOW DCIL SUPPORTS INCLUSION

- Providing Independent Living Skills training.
- Hosting inclusive social and recreation activities.
- Supporting individuals through peer mentorship.
- Conducting accessibility assessments.
- Empowering consumers to self-advocate for access and choice.





## DCIL Dickinson in the Community

# Dickinson consumers enjoy "Appreciation" day

Dakota Center for Independent Living in Dickinson held their annual Consumer Appreciation in October. Consumers enjoyed food, beverages and community at the local Pizza Ranch. They also played bingo and other games for chances to win fun prizes.

Dickinson Branch Office Coordinator Mary Beth reported it was a great time enjoyed by all, and says, "Thank you all for coming! We appreciate you!"



## Coats for Kids provided needed warmth in 2025

The Salvation Army's Coats for Kids event was on October 23<sup>rd</sup> in Dickinson. This event is always a well-anticipated event to help all the children in need as winter closes in.

Donations of new and gently used winter gear were collected by DCIL and other organizations for this cause. Dickinson Branch Office Coordinator Mary Beth Hoffman coordinated the event that included many local service providers on-site.

What a great community effort!





## Barbara can finally travel when she needs to



by Specialist Dee Dee

Barbara had been borrowing a portable oxygen concentrator from Sanford Equipment that was way too large for her and not transportable. Barbara actually had to drive from Beulah just to borrow it.

Also, Barbara was soon going to need to get her pacemaker replaced and would need to go to the cities to get that, but had

to delay it since she didn't have a portable oxygen option.

DCIL Specialist Dee Dee and the ND Transition and Diversion Program funding came together just in time to get Barbara the portable oxygen concentrator she desperately needed.

Now Barbara has the freedom to travel wherever and whenever she wants with her new portable oxygen option!



## Opportunity changed their lives for better

by Specialist McCallie

Adaline is a ten-year-old girl with autism, and she lives full time with her father, Jason. Jason fell into hard times after an injury and they lost their apartment. They had been staying in hotels, but Jason ran out of money to pay for the stays. The only option Jason had was for them to sleep in the car, but he was afraid to do this because the weather changed. He was worried that if they attempted to stay in the car they would freeze.

Jason contemplated taking his daughter to school one day and not returning for her. This would force the school to get local PD involved and then Adaline would be placed in foster care by CPS.

Jason's intention was to keep her safe and warm, but if he were to carry out this plan he would have received an abandonment charge and possible prison time.

I asked Jason to give me a day to figure out where to put him and Adaline. I only had three days in total to find temporary housing due to the Thanksgiving holiday. I asked Jason to consider going to Ministry on the Margin, which he agreed to do late Wednesday evening

of that week. One of the staff members there spent some time with Adaline and fell in love with her. That staff member contacted Sister Kathleen and asked if there was any way the Ministry would be able to help them.

Sister Kathleen contacted Jason and asked to meet with him the day after Thanksgiving so she could discuss getting him into a more permanent apartment. Sister Kathleen also paid for a hotel room for them to stay in while they waited for an apartment which meant they had somewhere safe and warm to be over the holiday weekend.

Jason contacted me the following Monday, stating that he had found a possible apartment for them, but what was holding him back on getting it was a past due electric bill and low credit score. I met with the apartment investment manager to discuss possible options on working around these issues. The manager agreed to look past the low credit, but the electric bill had to be paid off. I could not pay off the bill with TDP funding and spent a few hours calling different funding sources that could potentially help.

The last place I contacted was Adaline's CPS Case Worker to see if he

had any ideas that I may have missed. He asked how much the bill was and he consulted with his supervisor who then agreed to pay off the bill in full. This was taken back to the investment manager and Jason and Adaline were approved to move in immediately!

On Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>, Jason and Adaline received the keys to their new apartment. I purchased Adaline new bedroom furniture and other household supplies that were needed. Adaline will also get to stay in her current school for the rest of the year and will be starting an after-school program that she will attend 2 days a week. Jason will be starting a new job with his flooring company on Monday and has the opportunity to partner with his apartment's company to redo flooring in apartments that are being updated.

This will provide him and Adaline the income they will need to stay in this new apartment long term. Jason is grateful for all the help that was provided by staff at DCIL, Ministry on the Margin, CPS, West Central Human Resource Services, TDP Administration Team, and many more. This opportunity has definitely changed Adaline and Jason's lives for the better!



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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



Scan the QR code above  
to be taken to our website, or find  
Dakota Center for Independent Living  
on Facebook, Instagram, & YouTube!



### 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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