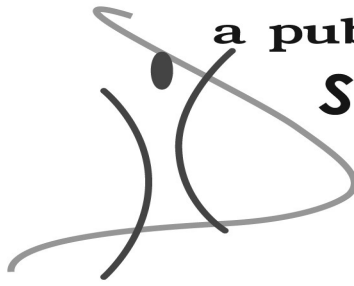


Centerpieces

a publication of

Southwestern Center for Independent Living (SWCIL)

Serving People with Disabilities in Southwestern Minnesota



2023 Consumer Success Stories

Every year SWCIL assists a number of individuals by providing the supports they need to achieve for themselves the goals they set out to accomplish. Among these we are proud to highlight a few from the past year who were willing to share their stories with a wider audience.

In no particular order, we begin with a money management class offered at the Renville County jail. Class members wanted information about starting a new business and learning about different aspects of money management, so a SWCIL staff member assisted these seven participants, who received a certificate for completing the class. This class covered banking, budgeting, cost comparisons, using credit, and other smart money habits.

Another story of consumer success involved a gentleman in his 60s who lives in a rural area and does not always have access to an ASL (American Sign Language) interpreter. He felt like he was always discriminated against as agencies and businesses felt that, if they could not get an interpreter and wrote things down for him instead, that was good enough. But he says that, when people write things down and he tries to understand, it gets all jumbled in his head.

Now it happened that a solar energy farm was being built next to his property, and public meetings were held where individuals could ask questions about this. He

received some information about the farm and brought the letter to SWCIL in order that staff might review it with him to better understand the situation, including what he might be paid if he allowed the solar farm to build next to his property.

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2023 Consumer Success Stories ... Continued

SWCIL staff then helped the individual compose a letter to the solar farm to request an in-person ASL interpreter at all future informational meetings. This letter included information on local interpreters the individual had used previously. At one time his local library and the Marshall library had Video Relay Systems that he was able to use, but neither library offers that any more. Nevertheless, the solar farm complied with his request, and this success has led the individual to become more aware of being an advocate for himself regarding his need to ask for interpreters at medical appointments.

Another success story SWCIL was proud to be a part of making happen involved an individual whose health took a sudden turn for the worst. Although the individual got the health attention needed, they became very weak due to the health condition. Climbing the steps to get into the house became a significant challenge and resulted in falling more than once. As a result, the couple ended up staying in hotels for a time.

However, once the individual and their spouse learned about SWCIL's temporary ramp program, SWCIL received a self-referral and completed an assessment of the couple's home. This resulted in a temporary ramp being set up for easy access to the house. Now the consumer was able to return home from the hotel, reestablishing the comforts of home while also saving the couple substantial money.

Sadly, however, the consumer's health continued to decline, and after being placed on hospice the individual recently passed away. But in response to being able to spend those last days at home rather than in a hotel or other location, the family said, "It [the temporary ramp] was a game changer, allowing us to remain in our home. It meant so much."

Another ramp-related success story involved SWCIL working with a consumer to customize a ramp SWCIL had installed for him and his wife. Because of health problems his wife was experiencing that occasionally required EMT assistance at the house, the base of the ramp needed to be widened by a foot because of the cart used by the EMTs to transport patients. A SWCIL staff member worked with the husband and the county office to quickly update the building permit and redesign the ramp accordingly, including moving the landing spot due to a concern that the ramp ending at the driveway would cause issues with snow being pushed onto the ramp during the winter. The consumer approved these changes and they proved a success for helping the family in this respect.

2023 Consumer Success Stories ... Continued



Destiny working on a tractor

The last success story we are happy to spotlight involves an ambitious young lady named Destiny Gibbens, who began working with SWCIL when she was still in high school. Destiny first worked on increasing her knowledge of Minnesota signs and driving laws in preparation for getting her driver's permit, a test she passed. She then set her sights on a higher goal.

Destiny worked closely with her independent living specialist from SWCIL to learn more about housing and the process involved with applying for federal education assistance. She created an account, submitted the required paperwork, and then, after receiving her student aid letter from FASFA, went through all the costs for her first semester of school (including books, tools, tuition, supplies, etc.) with her mother, her IL specialist, and representatives

from the Private Industry Council and Vocational Rehabilitation.

Destiny next applied, and was accepted, to MN West College in Canby for the Diesel Program. When SWCIL staff asked her why the Diesel Program, she replied that she had known since she was seven that this is what she wanted to do with her life, and that she plans on owning her own business one day. She asked her SWCIL staff to attend a campus tour with her, during which she was able to see the Diesel Program firsthand and talk with the instructors.

During this visit, Destiny, SWCIL staff, her grandmother, and a VRS counselor met with the Student Success Coordinator and Student Advisor. Destiny had a list that she had compiled with things she needed to remember to discuss, which worked great, and she also asked other questions she had not written down. She also applied for on-campus housing and discussed reasonable accommodations that she might need for school. SWCIL was able to provide her with assistive technology devices (a LiveScribe pen and notebook) for thirty days to see if they would help her be more successful in class. Destiny said she was very happy with the results and asked VRS if they might be able to assist with paying for the items.

Success Stories - Continued



Destiny standing beside sign outside school

Later, when Destiny reported that she was not able to live on campus, SWCIL staff helped her compile a list of apartments in Canby, as well as to set up appointments to see them, which resulted in her moving into one.

Recently Destiny reported that she is getting wonderful grades (3.45 grade average, B+) and loves diesel mechanics. She says she enjoys the 'hands on' of the program, taking apart engines and carburetors, and likes when she gets done

with a project before the guys in her class.

SWCIL celebrates all of these positive outcomes and looks forward to assisting many others to achieve their own goals in 2024.

"I'm Okay with That" - by Theo Braddy

Just before the end of 2023, the Executive Director of the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL), wrote the following message, which is reproduced here by permission from NCIL:

"Hello, this is Theo Braddy, Executive Director of NCIL. I wrote this message for the holidays. I hope it helps some. It helped me. My title is 'I'm Okay with That!'"

It took awhile, but I have come to some life conclusions.

Some people will not like me, and I'm okay with that.

I will not win every time.

Some people will say bad things about me.



Theo Braddy during a 2023 speaking event

Continued on page 5...

"I'm Okay with That" - by Theo Braddy

Some people will not agree with me, and I'm okay with that.

Some people will never believe in me.

Some people will quickly believe the bad things that are said about me, and I'm okay with that.

Some people will use me.

Some people will make jokes and poke fun at me.

Some people will never pick me up when I fall, pick up something I dropped, or assist me putting money in a parking meter, and I'm okay with that.

Some people will not be there when I need them.

Some people will tell others not to believe in me.

Some people don't like the way I look, the way I dress, or the way I talk, and I'm okay with that.

Some people will not like my closest friends, my wife, or my children.

Some people will not like how I drive my van or my wheelchair, and I'm okay with that.

Some people don't like the way I write or the messages I share.

I guess that will leave you and me, my friend. Thank you for not being like some people — and I'm okay with that!

This is Theo Braddy, bringing a little short message hopefully to help someone along the way during the holidays. Be okay with it. Be well. Bye-bye."

You can listen to the audio version of this message here: <https://bit.ly/48z9Tvs>

Important Program Changes for 2024

During last year's legislative session a number of bills were passed that will make significant positive changes to several important programs for Minnesotans with disabilities. The following is a brief summary of a couple of these.

The first of these bills will redefine parts of the MN statute language that determines how the Personal Care Attendant (PCA) program operates. Specifically, these language changes will allow PCAs to be paid for driving the clients for whom they work. Before this change, PCAs were allowed to accompany their clients to appointments, activities, or events in the community, but if their client wanted or needed to use their own vehicle to go anywhere, the law (defined by the state statute) required the PCA to volunteer the time they spent doing this.

Continued on page 6...

Important Program Changes ... Continued

Not only is this change exciting because it will positively affect the ability of Minnesotans with disabilities to live more independently, but SWCIL staff were involved in the grassroots advocacy that began this effort, in 2017. After two years of meetings with local and regional stakeholders to formulate potential amendment language to the statute, this group partnered with the MN Council on Disability to take the lead in advocating for the bill at the state Capitol. And while for three more years the bill (Reinstating Community Access for the PCA Program) failed to pass in the legislature, finally, in 2023, with plenty of bipartisan support, it passed. Then on November 7 of last year, the bill received the necessary federal approval, and was just announced as officially implemented as of the first week in February, 2024.

This means that PCAs are now allowed to be paid for driving their clients, though individuals will have to discuss this with the home care agencies that provide their PCAs, which may include an adjustment to their individual health care plan.

Another important legislative change that will also go into effect this year (in this case as soon as it receives federal approval, since the law became officially effective as of January 1, 2024) positively affects working Minnesotans with disabilities. That change is to the Medical Assistance for Employed Persons with Disabilities (MA-EPD) program, which will allow people with disabilities who work to be able to save much more money than they would be able to under normal constraints of MA (maximum asset limit: \$3000 per individual/\$6000 per couple).

But now, according to the 2023 Legislative Notice to MN Health Care Program members, “the \$20,000 asset limit for MA-EPD will be eliminated.” This tremendous change will prevent such individuals from having to either “spend down” their savings to remain under the asset limit, or to transfer their money into ABLE accounts, which have much higher asset limits, though the money placed into these accounts can only be used for a limited number of expenses related to a person’s health care and ability to live independently.

Both of these changes will be critical in unlocking independent living potential for many Minnesotans with disabilities. To see the other changes this year affecting the MA-EPD program and others, see (i.e. google) the 2023 Legislative Notice to Minnesota Health Care Program members.



Find us on Facebook and Like our page to keep up with all the latest SWCIL news and events.

Upcoming SWCIL Events

**RSVP: 507.532.2221, ext. 111 OR 800.422.1485 (MN Relay, dial 711)
rsvp@swcil.com OR message us on Facebook
All live events are smoke and fragrance free
Reasonable Accommodations upon request**

**To receive flyers by email, contact rsvp@swcil.com
Friends & family are welcome and encouraged to attend!**

2024 Social Rec/Community Ed Events

Updates will be posted on swcil.com and SWCIL's Facebook page

Monday, April 15, 2024 - Spring Fling Dance - 5:30-7:30 p.m. - Good Shepherd Lutheran Church -

Please RSVP by April 12

If you have poems, personal successes, letters to the editor or questions for our readers, send your submissions to: Ted at SWCIL 109 S. 5th Street, Suite 700, Marshall, MN 56258, or call the office at 507.532.2221, ext. 101.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT: SWCIL is dedicated to working with and responding to the ever changing needs of persons with disabilities in Southwestern Minnesota to promote societal acceptance, inclusion, and equal access for all persons with disabilities.

Southwestern Center for Independent Living (SWCIL) is a community-based, non-profit organization serving people with all disability types in the ten counties of southwestern Minnesota through: *Individual and Systems Advocacy *Cross-disability Peer Counseling *Information and Referral *Independent Living Skills Training and *Public Education. All of SWCIL's programs and services are consumer controlled with an emphasis on improving the quality of life for all people with disabilities. SWCIL's aim is to provide education and awareness to promote inclusion, acceptance and equal access in society for all people with disabilities.

For more information about SWCIL programs and services, please contact us at: 109 South 5th Street, Suite 700—Marshall, MN 56258 Phone: (507) 532-2221 or (800) 422-1485 (For MN Relay, dial 711) or fax (507) 532-2222.

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Facebook: www.facebook.com/SWCILMarshallMN
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