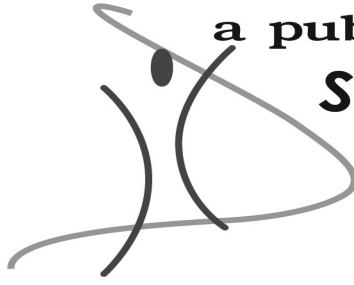


Centerpieces

a publication of

Southwestern Center for Independent Living (SWCIL)

Serving People with Disabilities in Southwestern Minnesota



Consumer Success Story - by Angela Algood



Lonnie Goettig

In 2013 Lonnie Goettig worked with SWCIL to apply for Social Security Disability benefits, but he was not successful. In July of 2022 Lonnie decided it was time to re-apply for Social Security Disability benefits again.

SWCIL assisted Lonnie with this process, including going through paperwork he had in order to determine what was needed for his application. After completing his application and waiting for the response, Lonnie was again denied. So SWCIL assisted Lonnie with appealing the decision. After his file was again reviewed, his appeal was also denied.

In February of 2024, SWCIL provided Lonnie with a list of lawyers he could work with in this regard, which he thought was a good idea. He ended up calling the Diebold Law office in Marshall, and after receiving a

hearing in October, Lonnie got the answer he had waited for. After having waited 11 years since he had first applied, approval for Social Security Disability benefits came in December. Lonnie felt like a weight had been lifted from his shoulders. His efforts had finally paid off.

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Byron Foss Success Story – by Rachel Thalacker



Byron Foss standing by his stovetop

Byron Foss is a single male living in Granite Falls. He works at Almich's grocery store and has been employed there for many years. Byron was previously married, and because his wife made all their meals, Byron didn't know how to cook.

Byron's co-worker noticed that he was losing weight because he wasn't eating enough. Byron would mainly rely on meals he picked up from the grocery store or food that friends would prepare for him. He typically ate just one meal a day, which usually came from the store. One of his co-workers knew he didn't know how to cook, so the co-worker reached out to SWCIL to learn more about services that could benefit Byron.

Byron started SWCIL services in 2022. He wanted to learn how to operate his

stove and oven to make Tater Tot Hotdish. Byron experiences challenges with hand dexterity, making it difficult for him to bend or straighten certain fingers.

Additionally, when he feels nervous about using his hands, he notices that they start to shake more. So it can be challenging for him to grasp, stir, chop, pour, or hold items while cooking.

Byron's adventure started with exploring SWCIL's inventory of Assistive Technology devices that could help him make cooking easier and less stressful. He discovered various cooking equipment items for this, including an "EaZy Hold Universal Cuff Grip Assist" to put around utensils, allowing him to slip his hand through and not worry about his grip. He also tried the "Can Opener for Ring-Pull Cans" and "Grip EZ Self-adjustable Jar Opener" to assist with opening cans, as well as the "Deluxe One-Handed Food Prep Paring and Cutting Board" and how to use it for holding cans and jars or holding objects to slice or chop.

Continued on page 3...

Byron Foss Success Story Cont'd - by Rachel Thalacker



Byron Foss stirring his pot

Byron also explored different styles of choppers to make cutting ingredients easier, instead of using a knife. With Byron's hand dexterity issue, he is unable to hold knife properly and was worried that he would cut himself. By having an adaptive chopper, his confidence with cutting ingredients has increased. He also found a stir/chop utensil for him to use to stir/mix ingredients or chop meat while browning them, and also purchased Bear Paw Shredders to shred meat easily. Lastly, he purchased an Easy-to-Read Measuring Cup Set. This style of measuring cup helps him pour from seeing above the measuring cup instead of having to bend over to read the line of measurement.

Byron wanted to learn how to make his own meals, particularly simple ones for single man living on his own. He had

never cooked in his life until he started services with SWCIL. Now Byron has made Mac-n-Cheese, Tater-tot hotdish, Tuna & Noodle hotdish, instant mashed potatoes, and Crockpot meals such as Chili, BBQ Pork, Beef and Noodles, Beef Stew, and Stroganoff.

When Byron first started SWCIL services, his hands would shake badly because of his anxiety about cooking, but now he is feeling more confident and his hands don't shake as badly. He loves being able to make simple meals using his crockpot and stove, and he appreciates SWCIL coming in and helping him learn how to cook. He has learned a lot through this process and can now say that he knows how to cook!



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

Jose Barajas Success Story – by Ruth Hubbling



Jose with backpack ready for school

Jose Barajas is an 18 y/o male immigrant from Mexico who is in his first year at MN West. Despite a diagnosis of Autism, he has transitioned well into college and earned a 4.0 in his classes during the fall semester.

Jose started working with SWCIL to study for his permit test in high school, which he earned in November. He then started working with SWCIL last summer (from a VRS referral) to get ready for the start of fall semester. He has begun the process to become a US citizen, and he would like to continue on after he gets his AA degree from MN West to study engineering.

Coaches Needed—Marshall Special Olympics

Have you ever coached or considered coaching? Marshall Special Olympics is currently seeking coaches for its spring season sports (swimming, basketball, and track and field). Here's more information:

- ♦ Tentative practice season is March through June
- ♦ Practice dates TBD by coaches & availability of practice facilities
- ♦ No experience needed; willingness to have fun, cheer on, and make the sport a positive experience for athletes
- ♦ Anyone interested will need to complete SOMN Level 1 or Level 2 Coaches training online
- ♦ If not enough coaches for a sport, the sport will not be held this spring

If interested in coaching or learning more about coaching, please contact Lori Folk with Marshall Special Olympics, at lorifolk@hotmail.com.

Can Alexa or Amazon Echo Help You? – by Ted Stamp

Although some of us still remain wary of the extent to which touchscreen and voice-operated technologies have been taking over our world and even our homes in recent years, it's hard to deny the appeal some of these devices have, particularly for helping people with disabilities to live more independently.

Besides the voice-operated features of cell phones, I'm referring specifically to Amazon's plethora of products offering Alexa, their always-available virtual assistant ready to attend to your every wish. Alexa is not only for answering your everyday curiosities. She is happy to take over the controls of as much of your household as you are willing to grant her permission, whether the lights, your TV and stereo, your heating and cooling, or more. Most of these settings can now be adjusted from many miles away through an app on your smart phone.



Screen of Amazon Echo Device

And while it may seem disconcerting to relinquish control over these things to an artificially intelligent entity, for those with substantial strength and/or dexterity limitations, the chance to control these by voice can come as liberating news.

For some this can mean no longer having to ask someone else to adjust these settings, while for others it can save the effort and frustration of struggling to press a button on a remote or to flip a stubborn switch. In short, such devices offer a new level of convenience and independence to people facing such challenges.

The Amazon Echo Show line of devices is a prime example. This adds to the usual Alexa experience the addition of a desktop screen. The newest version is even 21 inches and can be hung on the wall. This offers the additional possibility for those with visual impairments to be able to enlarge the text of emails or other online content like recipes, song lyrics, or books. The visual aspect may be particularly helpful for things like appointment or medication reminders, or behavioral cues.

And with many previous versions and screen sizes available, one doesn't need to be able to afford the latest version. It is a product definitely worth exploring.

Disability Advocacy Day at the Capitol



Disability Advocacy Day logo

The Minnesota Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (MNCDD) is excited to co-host Disability Advocacy Day at the Capitol again this year on Tuesday, March 25! The theme this year is Disability Justice: Defining Our Future, Remembering the Past.

MN-CCD will be hosting an in-person rally in the Capitol Rotunda from 11:00-11:45 a.m. If you can't be there in-person, don't worry. They are planning an entire week of events and grassroots actions, so there will be plenty of opportunity to advocate virtually as well.

Please register in advance: <https://forms.office.com/r/WUD1LnqanG>.

Check out the event [Facebook page](#) for more information.

To join this event as an event co-sponsor or volunteer, please contact Lily Hijazi-Sacay (lily.sacay@lssmn.org) or Bridget Carter (bcarter@mncdd.org). Stay tuned for more information in the weeks to come.

The 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.

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

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!**

2024-2025 Social Rec/Community Ed Events

**Specifics & updates posted on swcil.com (Calendar of Events)
and SWCIL's Facebook page
RSVP at rsvp@swcil.com**

2025, Apr. 7, 5-7 PM - Throwback Prom

2025, Apr. 15, 16, 17 - 4-5:30 PM (ZOOM) - Driving into Success

2025, June - Soap Carving Event - Watch for Date/Time

SWCIL SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Individual and Systems Advocacy
- Independent Living Skills Training
- Prevention of Institutionalization
- Support Planner Services (CDCS)
- Relocation to Community-based Living
- Youth Transition
- Peer Counseling
- Veterans Services
- Ramp Program
- Assistive Technology
- Information and Referral

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.**

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.

Southwestern Center for Independent Living
109 South 5th Street, Suite 700
Marshall, MN 56258-1268
Phone: 507-532-2221 or 800-422-1485 (For MN Relay, dial 711)

Website: <http://www.swcil.com>
E-mail: swcil@swcil.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/SWCILMarshallMN
Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/US-xO75AFKykiFuz4EiVj9lw>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/swcilmarshallmn>

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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.

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