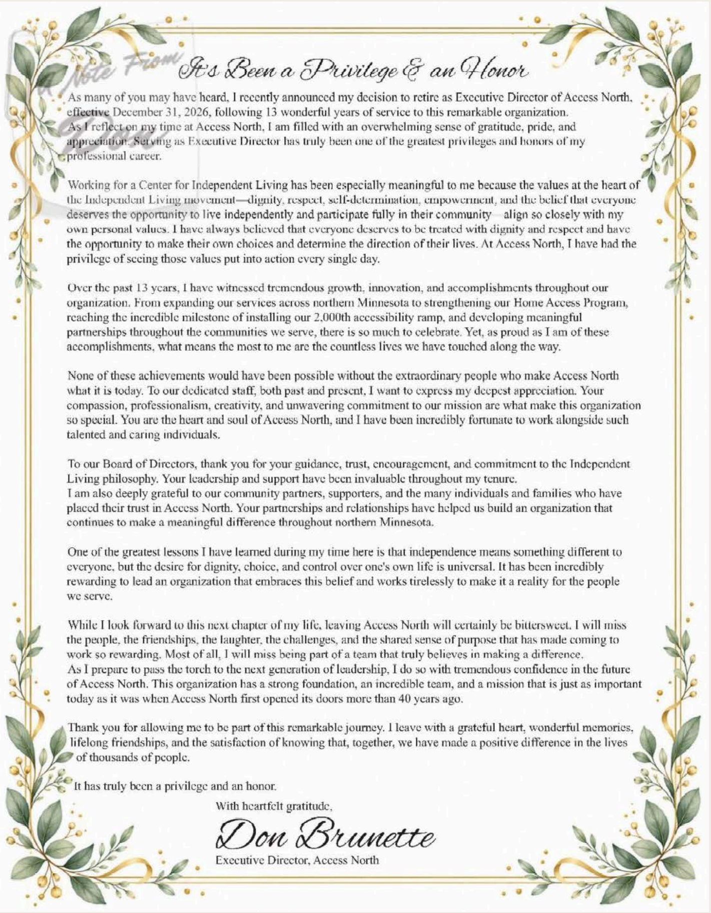
UpNorth News

Access North

Center for Independent Living of Northeastern Minnesota

Fall '26



A Note From Don

It's Been a Privilege & an Honor

As many of you may have heard, I recently announced my decision to retire as Executive Director of Access North, effective December 31, 2026, following 13 wonderful years of service to this remarkable organization.
As I reflect on my time at Access North, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude, pride, and appreciation. Serving as Executive Director has truly been one of the greatest privileges and honors of my professional career.

Working for a Center for Independent Living has been especially meaningful to me because the values at the heart of the Independent Living movement—dignity, respect, self-determination, empowerment, and the belief that everyone deserves the opportunity to live independently and participate fully in their community—align so closely with my own personal values. I have always believed that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect and have the opportunity to make their own choices and determine the direction of their lives. At Access North, I have had the privilege of seeing those values put into action every single day.

Over the past 13 years, I have witnessed tremendous growth, innovation, and accomplishments throughout our organization. From expanding our services across northern Minnesota to strengthening our Home Access Program, reaching the incredible milestone of installing our 2,000th accessibility ramp, and developing meaningful partnerships throughout the communities we serve, there is so much to celebrate. Yet, as proud as I am of these accomplishments, what means the most to me are the countless lives we have touched along the way.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the extraordinary people who make Access North what it is today. To our dedicated staff, both past and present, I want to express my deepest appreciation. Your compassion, professionalism, creativity, and unwavering commitment to our mission are what make this organization so special. You are the heart and soul of Access North, and I have been incredibly fortunate to work alongside such talented and caring individuals.

To our Board of Directors, thank you for your guidance, trust, encouragement, and commitment to the Independent Living philosophy. Your leadership and support have been invaluable throughout my tenure.
I am also deeply grateful to our community partners, supporters, and the many individuals and families who have placed their trust in Access North. Your partnerships and relationships have helped us build an organization that continues to make a meaningful difference throughout northern Minnesota.

One of the greatest lessons I have learned during my time here is that independence means something different to everyone, but the desire for dignity, choice, and control over one's own life is universal. It has been incredibly rewarding to lead an organization that embraces this belief and works tirelessly to make it a reality for the people we serve.

While I look forward to this next chapter of my life, leaving Access North will certainly be bittersweet. I will miss the people, the friendships, the laughter, the challenges, and the shared sense of purpose that has made coming to work so rewarding. Most of all, I will miss being part of a team that truly believes in making a difference.
As I prepare to pass the torch to the next generation of leadership, I do so with tremendous confidence in the future of Access North. This organization has a strong foundation, an incredible team, and a mission that is just as important today as it was when Access North first opened its doors more than 40 years ago.

Thank you for allowing me to be part of this remarkable journey. I leave with a grateful heart, wonderful memories, lifelong friendships, and the satisfaction of knowing that, together, we have made a positive difference in the lives of thousands of people.

It has truly been a privilege and an honor.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Don Brunette

Executive Director, Access North

6th Annual Accessible Deer Hunt a Success!

Celebrating Six Years of Outdoor Recreation, Friendship and Accessibility

Access North is proud to celebrate another successful Accessible Deer Hunt at McCarthy Beach State Park! Now in its sixth year, this wonderful event continues to be a highlight of our fall season, bringing together hunters, volunteers, and community partners who share a passion for the outdoors and a commitment to making outdoor recreation accessible to everyone.

Our partnership with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and McCarthy Beach State Park has grown into something truly special over the past six years. What began as an opportunity to provide an accessible hunting experience for individuals with disabilities has become a cherished annual tradition filled with camaraderie, friendship, and unforgettable memories.

This year, **12 hunters participated in the event, including five military veterans.** Seven hunters participated in the rifle hunt, while five chose to hunt using bows or crossbows. Each hunter had the opportunity to experience Minnesota's beautiful outdoors while enjoying a recreational activity they love.

Two deer were successfully harvested during this year's hunt! One was harvested by military veteran **Corporal Jon Schneider,** who demonstrated his skill with a compound bow. The second was harvested by **Cory Younce**, who hunted from an all-terrain track chair. These successful hunts were exciting highlights of the event and wonderful examples of how adaptive equipment and accessible recreational opportunities can help remove barriers for hunters with disabilities.

Accessibility was once again at the heart of this year's event. **Three hunters utilized all-terrain track chairs,** allowing them to navigate outdoor terrain that might otherwise have been inaccessible. Hunters also had access to **two elevated hydraulic deer stands,** including one provided by the Minnesota DNR. These adaptive hunting opportunities help ensure that physical limitations do not prevent individuals from experiencing the excitement, independence, and enjoyment of hunting.

We are especially grateful to the **Minnesota DNR and McCarthy Beach State Park** for their outstanding partnership and commitment to accessibility. Their generous support, including providing additional track chairs and hydraulic deer stand lifts, has been instrumental in making this event possible. Their willingness to work alongside Access North to expand accessible outdoor recreation demonstrates what can be accomplished when organizations share a common vision of inclusion and opportunity.

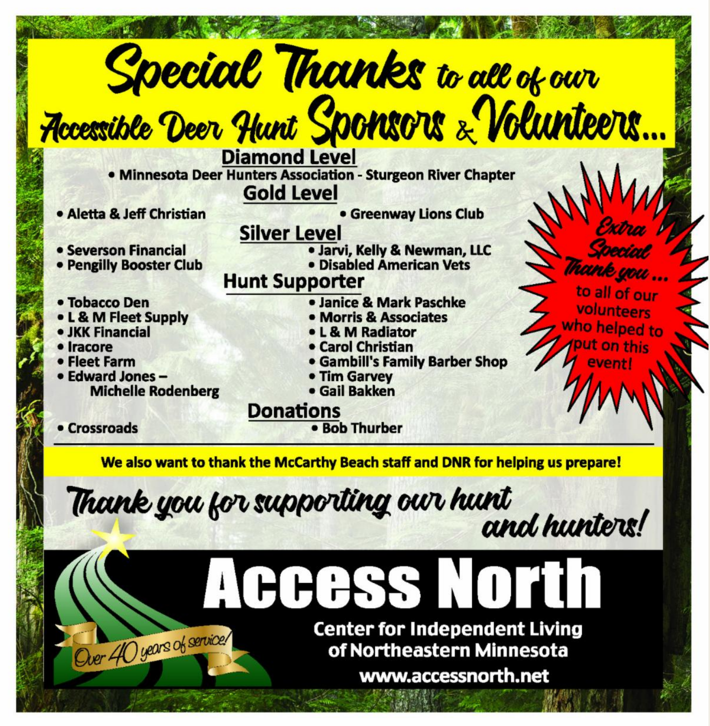
One of the most rewarding aspects of this event continues to be the incredible dedication of our volunteers. We are fortunate to have so many individuals return year after year, generously sharing their time, talents, and enthusiasm to make this hunt possible. From assisting hunters and preparing equipment to ensuring everyone has a safe and enjoyable experience, our volunteers truly are the heart of this event. Their commitment speaks volumes about the friendships and sense of community that have developed over the past six years.

At Access North, our mission is centered on empowering people with disabilities to live independently, make their own choices, and participate fully in their communities. **Accessibility extends far beyond homes, workplaces, and transportation. It also means ensuring that people with disabilities have opportunities to enjoy the recreational activities, outdoor adventures, and personal experiences that enrich our lives.** Our Accessible Deer Hunt is a wonderful example of this philosophy in action.

While harvesting a deer is certainly an exciting accomplishment, the success of this event is measured by much more than the number of deer harvested. It's about providing opportunities, removing barriers, building confidence, and creating lasting friendships. Whether a hunter harvests a deer or simply enjoys a peaceful day in the woods, every participant contributes to the spirit and success of this special event.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the Minnesota DNR, McCarthy Beach State Park staff, our dedicated volunteers, and everyone who contributed to making this year's hunt such a success. Your generosity, hard work, and commitment to accessibility make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

And to our hunters, thank you for being part of this wonderful tradition! Your enthusiasm, determination, and love of the outdoors remind us why this event is so important. **Here's to six wonderful years of breaking down barriers, building friendships, and demonstrating that the great outdoors truly belongs to everyone. We look forward to many more years of accessible hunting adventures together!**



Special Thanks to all of our Accessible Deer Hunt Sponsors & Volunteers...

Diamond Level

- Minnesota Deer Hunters Association - Sturgeon River Chapter

Gold Level

- Aletta & Jeff Christian
- Greenway Lions Club

Silver Level

- Severson Financial
- Pengilly Booster Club
- Jarvi, Kelly & Newman, LLC
- Disabled American Vets

Hunt Supporter

- Tobacco Den
- L & M Fleet Supply
- JKK Financial
- Iracore
- Fleet Farm
- Edward Jones – Michelle Rodenberg
- Janice & Mark Paschke
- Morris & Associates
- L & M Radiator
- Carol Christian
- Gambill's Family Barber Shop
- Tim Garvey
- Gail Bakken

Donations

- Crossroads
- Bob Thurber

Extra Special Thank you... to all of our volunteers who helped to put on this event!

We also want to thank the McCarthy Beach staff and DNR for helping us prepare!

Thank you for supporting our hunt and hunters!

Access North

Over 40 years of service!

Center for Independent Living
of Northeastern Minnesota
www.accessnorth.net

Access North's Aging-in-Place Presentation Well Received by Duluth Seniors

Helping Older Adults Remain Safe, Independent, and Comfortable in Their Own Homes

Access North Board President Shawn Corbin and Executive Director Don Brunette had the pleasure of presenting to the GEMs (Gathering of Elderly Members) group this fall at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Duluth. The presentation focused on Access North's Aging in Place services and the many ways our organization helps older adults and people with disabilities remain safely and independently in their own homes.

The presentation generated considerable interest and thoughtful discussion among attendees, particularly regarding the availability of financial assistance, the costs associated with home accessibility modifications, and how to determine which improvements might best meet an individual's needs.

One of the most important messages shared was that aging in place doesn't always require expensive renovations or major construction projects. Sometimes relatively simple, affordable modifications—such as installing grab bars, improving bathroom accessibility, adding handrails, or constructing an entrance ramp—can make a tremendous difference in a person's safety, confidence, and ability to remain independent.

A key question raised during the discussion was, "*How do I know what modifications my home might need, and how can I afford them?*"

The answer begins with a simple conversation with Access North.

Our knowledgeable staff can help individuals explore potential funding sources, including available grants, waiver programs, and other financial assistance opportunities. Additionally, Access North's **Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS)** can help assess a home's accessibility and recommend practical modifications tailored to an individual's unique needs, abilities, and circumstances.

With decades of experience providing accessibility solutions throughout northern Minnesota, Access North understands that **remaining at home is about much more than convenience—it's about preserving independence, dignity, personal choice, and quality of life.** As our population ages, helping people remain safely in familiar surroundings, connected to their families, neighbors, and communities, has never been more important.

We sincerely appreciate the invitation from the GEMs group and the opportunity to share information about these important services. The engaging questions and meaningful conversations reinforced the growing need for accessible housing solutions and the importance of helping seniors understand the resources available to them.

Our message is simple: Don't wait until a fall, injury, or health crisis makes remaining at home more difficult. Being proactive about home accessibility can help prevent accidents, reduce barriers, and support independence for years to come.

Let Access North Help You Age in Place!

Whether you're planning for the future, experiencing new mobility challenges, or helping a loved one remain safely at home, Access North is here to help you explore your options.

Contact Access North today to start the conversation.
Phone: 1-800-390-3681
Email: info@accessnorth.net
Your home. Your independence. Your choice.

~ Don Brunette, Executive Director

Your Generosity Changes Lives. Your Support Makes Independence Possible.

Help Access North Continue Building a Future of Independence, Dignity, and Opportunity.

CHARITABLE GIVING

At Access North, we believe everyone deserves the opportunity to live independently, safely, and with dignity in the community they call home. For more than 40 years, we've worked to make that belief a reality for thousands of individuals with disabilities and older adults throughout northern Minnesota.

But we can't do it alone.

Your generosity makes a difference.

Every donation, regardless of size, helps us remove barriers, create opportunities, and provide life-changing services to individuals who need them most. Whether it's constructing a wheelchair ramp, making a home more accessible, helping an older adult remain safely at home, or empowering someone with a disability to live more independently, your support helps turn challenges into possibilities.

As the need for accessible housing and independent living services continues to grow, so does the importance of community support. Your generosity helps us reach more individuals, respond to emerging needs, and sustain the programs that make a lasting difference in people's lives.

There Are Many Ways to Make a Difference

Make a One-Time Gift

Your tax-deductible contribution helps support Access North's mission and provides valuable resources to individuals throughout our communities. Every gift matters, and every dollar brings us closer to a future where independence and accessibility are within everyone's reach.

Donate to Access North

Leave a Legacy Through Planned Giving

Looking for a meaningful way to make a lasting impact? Consider including Access North in your estate or charitable giving plans. Planned gifts can help ensure that future generations of older adults and people with disabilities continue to have access to the services, resources, and opportunities they deserve.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss planned giving options with you and, if desired, work alongside your financial advisor to explore a giving strategy that reflects your personal goals, values, and philanthropic wishes.

Together, We Can Make Independence Possible for Generations to Come

As we reflect on more than four decades of service, we are reminded that our greatest accomplishments have been made possible through the generosity, compassion, and commitment of people who believe in our mission.

Your gift is more than a donation. It's a wheelchair ramp that opens a doorway. It's a safer home for an aging neighbor. It's greater independence for a person with a disability. And it's the peace of mind that comes from knowing help is available when it's needed most.

Thank you for believing in Access North and the people we serve. Together, we can continue breaking down barriers, changing lives, and building communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Give today. Make a difference tomorrow.
Leave a legacy of independence for generations to come.

~ Don Brunette, Executive Director

Donate to Access North

Access North attends NCIL Conference

This summer, Access North staff had the opportunity to attend the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. This year's theme was "Protect. Persist. Prosper." and brought together people from Centers for Independent Living and disability advocates from across the country.

The conference is always a great opportunity to connect with others in the Independent Living movement, learn about what other Centers are doing, and bring new ideas back to our own communities. Staff attended workshops on a variety of topics impacting people with disabilities and Centers for Independent Living.

One of the highlights of the conference was participating in the annual March and Rally to the Capitol alongside advocates from across the country. Conference attendees also had the opportunity to participate in Hill visits and talk with legislators about issues that impact people with disabilities and Independent Living.

Attending NCIL is a great reminder that while much of our work happens locally, we are part of a much larger Independent Living movement working toward the same goal: ensuring people with disabilities have the opportunity to live independently, make their own choices, and fully participate in their communities.

~ Kiri Basore, Independent Living Co-Lead

KNOW YOUR VOTING RIGHTS!

NEW FOR 2026: EARLY VOTING

This is similar to voting in a polling place on Election Day, and starts 18 days before the election. For all statewide elections, every county will have at least one location where early voting is offered.

In Minnesota, you have the right to the following as protected by federal law. Election staff must be trained on and respect these rights:

- Accessible voter registration
- Accessible polling places
- Policies and procedures that do not discriminate against you based on your disability
- Accessible, available, and operational voting systems
- Your service animal to accompany you inside the polling place
- The right to vote privately and independently or with assistance, if needed
- Assistance from a person of your choice in some situations. This person can be a friend, family member, or poll worker

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Grit, Growth and Grace: Access North Connects and Finds Inspiration at the 2026 St. Louis County Conference

Access North had the privilege of participating in the 2026 St. Louis County Health and Human Services Conference, centered around the theme "Grit, Growth and Grace." With more than 200 agencies represented, the conference provided a wonderful opportunity to connect with others who share a passion for supporting individuals, families, and communities.

Access North hosted a booth alongside the many participating agencies, giving us the opportunity to share who we are, build connections, and learn more about the resources and services available to the individuals we serve. The opening and closing keynote speakers offered motivating messages focused on the importance of our work as healthcare and human services professionals, reminding us of the impact we make and the importance of continuing to grow in our roles.

One of the greatest highlights was connecting with our Access North team members who were able to attend, as well as finally putting faces to the many names we regularly email back and forth with throughout our busy workdays. From networking and collecting swag to petting therapy dogs and exploring new resources for our clients, the conference offered something for everyone!

Most importantly, the experience gave us the opportunity to step away from our daily routines, learn something new, strengthen professional relationships, and discover additional options that may benefit the individuals and families we support. These opportunities help us expand our knowledge, sharpen our skills, and bring fresh ideas back to our work.

We are grateful to have been part of such a meaningful event. The 2026 conference was a great reminder that grit keeps us moving forward, growth helps us become better at what we do, and grace reminds us of the compassion at the heart of our work. We left feeling re-energized, inspired, and ready to take on the challenges and opportunities of the weeks ahead!

~ Tammy Betters, CFSS Program Co-Manager

Fall Celebration takes a Dark but Lighthearted Turn

Each fall, Access North staff and board members come together for a special celebration to recognize our accomplishments, strengthen relationships, and enjoy some well-deserved fun outside of our daily routines. It's a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the past year, celebrate our successes, and simply enjoy each other's company.

Over the years, we've enjoyed some memorable adventures, including a scenic train ride at the Minnesota Discovery Center and an entertaining afternoon of axe throwing at the Iron House. This year, however, we decided to add a little mystery, intrigue, and murder to the festivities!

Our annual fall celebration took place at Valentini's Restaurant in Chisholm, where we enjoyed a delicious meal accompanied by an interactive murder mystery performance. We invited the Murder Mystery Theatre to entertain us with a lively production titled **"Midnight at the Masquerade."**

Planning the event was an adventure in itself! We worked with the theatre group's Crime Scene Consultant to select a theme that would be a perfect fit for our staff and board. Our chosen mystery transported us to an elegant masquerade ball at the exclusive Billionaire's Club, where glamorous guests, hidden identities, suspicious characters, and unexpected twists set the stage for an unforgettable evening.

The professional actors guided us through the mystery, inviting audience members to participate, examine clues, question suspects, and put their detective skills to the test. Of course, with a room full of Access North employees and board members, there was no shortage of personalities willing to join in the fun!

While the evening may have centered around a fictional murder, the real purpose was to celebrate the incredible people who make Access North such a special organization. Our staff and board work hard throughout the year to advance our mission of empowering people with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in their communities. Taking time to laugh, connect, and celebrate together is an important part of maintaining the positive organizational culture we value so much.

A little mystery, a lot of laughter, and great company made this year's fall celebration one to remember!

~ Don Brunette, Executive Director

Access North continues WIOA Career Counseling Services

Access North is pleased to continue our partnership with Minnesota DEED to provide Career Counseling, Information and Referral (CCI&R) services for another two years.

Through this work, Access North provides CCI&R services to individuals with disabilities who are employed at subminimum wage under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. These services are required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and help ensure individuals have information about competitive integrated employment, employment services, and other resources available in their communities.

When Access North first began providing CCI&R services, our staff worked with individuals at 15 different 14(c) program sites throughout our service area. Today, that number has decreased to just two. This reflects the significant changes that have taken place in employment services for people with disabilities over the years, including increased opportunities and supports for people to work in community settings.

The two remaining programs continue to provide employment opportunities and supports based on individual choice, including opportunities for individuals to work in the community with staffing support when that is where they choose to work. CCI&R is not about telling someone where they should work. It is about making sure people have information about their options and resources so they can make informed choices about employment.

During CCI&R, Access North staff meet directly with individuals to talk about competitive integrated employment, available employment services and supports, and resources within their communities. These conversations also provide an opportunity to discuss self-advocacy, self-determination, and other resources that can support individuals in reaching their employment goals.

We appreciate the opportunity to continue this work and our partnership with Minnesota DEED for another two years. Through the new contract, Access North can provide CCI&R services to up to 150 individuals throughout our service area.

~ Kiri Basore, Independent Living Co-Lead

Northland Adaptive Equipment

If you feel like all of the cool activities the Northland has are for you, but you don't even know where to start on finding accessible options, Northland Adaptive Recreation (NAR) could be for you. NAR has operated in the Duluth area for over 40 years, providing accessible recreation options to area residents. Since 2023, NAR has worked under the Miller-Dwan Foundation, which has allowed them to expand the adaptive recreational activities in the area. As we approach the changing seasons, some of their winter activities include dog sledding and alpine skiing. They also offer things like lacrosse, dragon boating, and a fishing tourney as well. They even host a clay shooting event every fall. For the full range of activities check out their website ***northlandadaptive.org***

NAR operates on the foundation that no participant will be turned away due to financial constraints, so don't feel like you can't reach out if finances are behind your hesitation. They also primarily work with volunteers to keep their programming running smoothly. Volunteers help keep costs low and make a real difference for the people they work with. It doesn't just benefit the individuals using NAR programming, though. Volunteering is a great resume builder, can help you get connected in the community, and can even build your own skills and interests in the programming NAR offers.

~ Grace Namovich, Independent Living Coordinator

Supporting our Neighbors: IndiGO Superior Pride

Access North
Access North

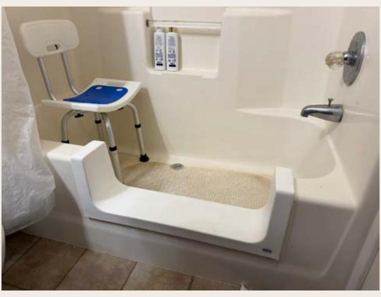
We had the opportunity to celebrate disability pride and do some tabling at the IndiGO Pride event. IndiGO is the Center for Independent Living across the bridge in Superior, WI. Even though we operate not just in different service areas, but different states, collaboration is just as important in the CIL network. We were able to connect with individuals at the event who were from Superior, but currently live in Duluth and were in need of resources. We were able to network with local hospitals who were aware of the services IndiGO offers, but had no idea we were right across the bridge. We had folks interested in moving to Duluth but had no idea how to even begin that process and didn't know where to turn for support. There were people who, despite being at a CIL event, had no idea what Centers for Independent Living were all about.

Tabling is more than just the free stuff. Sure, it's cool to give out candy and brochures. It's nice to act as a public face for Access North. But what I would argue is more important is building connections with community members. Even if some of the people who stopped to chat with us weren't directly in need of our services, they walked away with a name and a location of who might be able to help should they, or their loved ones, ever need it.

~ Grace Namovich, Independent Living Coordinator

A Small Modification with a Big Impact

With gratitude to the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation for making greater safety and independence possible.



I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to connect with Grand Rapids resident Jan Erickson and offer her a tub cut grant which was graciously provided from the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation (GRACF). The tub cut, which also included some new supplies such as a grab bar, shower chair, curtain, and shower head, was installed at the beginning of September. Jan mentioned that she has two artificial knees along with arthritis throughout her body. "What really was the breaking point was that I had five different ankle surgeries in the last three years. Stepping over the side of the tub was impossible," Jan shared. When asked how the tub cut has impacted her life over the last few weeks, Jan said, "This has been life changing for me."

Jan's story is a great example of how a relatively simple home modification can make a meaningful difference in someone's ability to remain safe and independent in their own home. Access North is proud to help individuals identify solutions that meet their unique needs and support their independence at home. We are grateful to the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation for helping make this project possible and for investing in opportunities that allow community members like Jan to continue living safely and independently in the homes they love.

~ Alyssa Beaty, Independent Living Coordinator

Welcome to our Reception Desk, Jade!

Hi everybody! I'm Jade, the new receptionist in Hibbing. I was born and raised in Florida, but moved to the Iron Range to help take care of my aging grandparents.

I also worked as a DSP for years, which was a wonderful way to connect with my new community. I absolutely loved working with my clients, so I'm hoping my experiences on that side will translate to my new position with the Access North team!

In my free time I love cooking, baking, and spending time with my family, friends, and my pets - my three grumpy cats, and my hyperactive Australian Shepherd.

I am looking forward to getting to know all the wonderful people in the Access North family!

Celebrating our Direct Support Professionals: You Make a Difference

DATE 10-6-26
PAY TO THE ORDER OF Cash
$ 500.00
Five Hundred Dollars!
DOLLARS
FOR DSP Recognition

In celebration of National Direct Support Professionals Week, Access North is proud to honor five outstanding DSPs with a $500 award each. These recipients reflect the compassion, dedication, and commitment to independence that we are grateful to see throughout our DSP community. Please join us in celebrating their meaningful work.

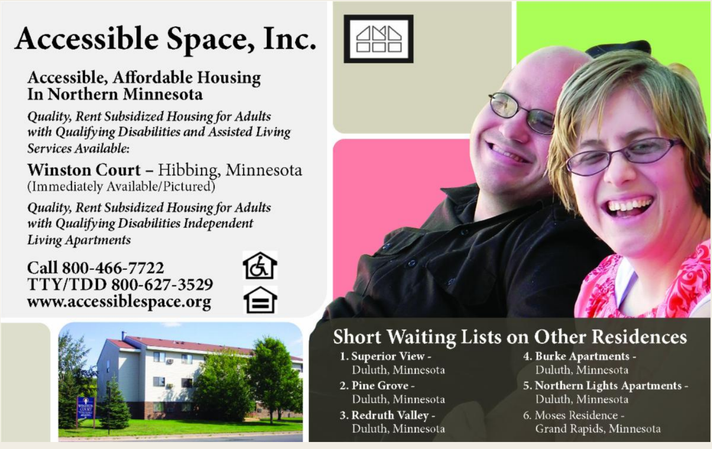
Every nomination we received was meaningful and a reminder of the care, compassion, and dedication our DSPs bring to their work. Reading them made us wish we could recognize every nominee with an award. Each story showed how much it matters to have someone who listens, encourages, advocates, and shows up when needed.

To all of our DSPs, including our CFSS Staff (PCAs), Homemakers, In-Home and Respite Support staff: thank you. You support people in making their own choices, building independence, and living fuller lives. The everyday moments you share can leave a lasting impact, even when you may not realize it.

Whether or not you received a nomination or an award, please know that your work matters, your kindness matters, and you are deeply appreciated.

~ Jacob Knaffla, Independent Living Co-Lead

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ADVERTISEMENT ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~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Short Waiting Lists on Other Residences

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2. **Pine Grove** - Duluth, Minnesota
3. **Redruth Valley** - Duluth, Minnesota
4. **Burke Apartments** - Duluth, Minnesota
5. **Northern Lights Apartments** - Duluth, Minnesota
6. Moses Residence - Grand Rapids, Minnesota

Itasca County Community Connect 2026

Access North
Center for Independent Living of Northeastern Minnesota
Over 30 years of service
www.accessnorth.net

Access North had a great day connecting with the community at the Itasca County Community Connect event! Throughout the day, we connected with 106 people, sharing information about Access North, answering questions, and helping people learn more about the services and resources available to them. We also completed five Information & Referrals for individuals who had specific needs and were looking for additional support.

Our table stayed busy with people stopping by for essential everyday supplies such as, paper towels, toilet paper, toothbrushes, band-aids, and toothpaste.

One of the best parts of events like Community Connect is that the connections don't stop at our own table. We had the opportunity to talk one-on-one with staff from other local organizations, learn more about the resources they offer, share information about Access North, and build relationships that can help us better connect people with resources in the future.

At the end of the event, we were also able to share our remaining supplies with other organizations serving people throughout the community, including Hope House, Grace House, Foster Love Closet, First Lutheran Church, KOOTASCA, and AEOA agencies.

It was a busy and successful day of sharing resources, making connections, and working alongside other organizations with the same goal of supporting people in our community and making sure they know where they can turn when they need a little help.

~ Amber Pittman, Independent Living Coordinator

A New View of Independence

AT CORNER
Spotlight on Assistive Technology

What if a pair of glasses could help someone read a label, identify an object, or get assistance without holding a phone? Smart glasses are creating new possibilities for people who are blind, have low vision or have difficulty reading. Devices such as Ray-Ban Meta glasses combine a camera, microphones, and speakers with features that can read text aloud and describe what is in front of the wearer. Through Be My Eyes, users can also connect with a sighted volunteer who sees through the glasses' camera and provides assistance.

Whether sorting household items or reading unfamiliar packaging, this technology offers another way to access visual information while keeping both hands available. These tools can make mistakes, and features vary by device, but they offer an exciting example of how everyday technology can support greater independence.

~ Jacob Knaffla, Independent Living Co-Lead

Featured Recipe: Easy Slow Cooker Chicken and Sweet Potatoes

A cozy fall dinner with just 5 ingredients.

Ingredients
1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs
2 large sweet potatoes, peeled, cut into 1" chunks
½ cup chicken broth
1 teaspoon garlic powder
½ teaspoon salt

Directions
Place sweet potatoes in the slow cooker. Lay chicken thighs on top.
Pour in broth and sprinkle with garlic powder and salt.
Cover and cook on low for 4–6 hours, until the sweet potatoes are tender and the chicken reaches 165°F in the center.
Spoon the cooking juices over each serving and enjoy.

Access North Center for Independent Living of NE Minnesota | 1309 East 40th Street | Hibbing, MN 55746 US

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