



NDAD

helping others to help themselves

Insider

'It's always beneficial when you can help out, too'

Grand Forks man's volunteerism gets boost from NDAD assistance

Dean Knutson performs volunteer respite care visits in East Grand Forks, Minn., on behalf of Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota. The Grand Forks resident likes the fit, for several reasons.

"I've been told I can talk," he said, smiling. He says he's a good listener, too – a key component of respite service.

Knutson also is able to make those volunteer visits with greater ease. With help from a new custom-designed wheelchair, which he bought with help from his insurance company, and a wheelchair lift provided from NDAD with an assist from the East Grand Forks Eagles Club, Knutson is relishing a level of independence in 2012 that for several decades had deteriorated steadily.

"I can go anywhere," Knutson said.

Knutson lives with myasthenia gravis, a condition that afflicts about 35,000 U.S. residents.

The autoimmune disorder is characterized by extreme muscle weakness and progressive fatigue. Its onset is gradual; its course, variable. In some cases, respiratory failure and death can result.

Diagnosed in 1990, the disorder sometimes caused Knutson to crash suddenly to the floor after exerting himself. That increasing likelihood cost him his job 16 years ago as a school bus driver and janitor for East Grand Forks Public Schools, despite efforts by the superintendent and a school principal "to accommodate me every way they could," he recalls. In April 1996, at age 42, Knutson's inability to safely perform his work forced his retirement -- a heartbreaking conclusion he calls "the worst thing a person can go through."

With his condition worsening, he found himself increasingly confined inside his own



Dean Knutson

inaccessible mobile home. He learned about NDAD, sought assistance and got help. NDAD approved funds to build a wheelchair ramp and wider porch door for his residence. "I was very happy to get it," Knutson recalled.

Ultimately, myasthenia gravis' progression forced him to sell his
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NDAD MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of NDAD is to enhance the quality of lives of individuals facing health challenges.

Financial help to get the assistive device you need

Flexible terms, low interest rates part of NDAD's Financial Loan Program

If you, a family member, a friend, or someone else you know is living with some type of disability that hampers independence and quality of life, an assistive device might be the missing piece that would solve a daily puzzle of frustration. But what happens if the device seems beyond your financial reach? Maybe it's not.

That's where NDAD's Financial Loan Program might be just the help you're looking for. It helps North Dakotans obtain these devices, using low-interest loans and offer flexible financing terms. The program, operated in cooperation with North Dakota-based Alerus Financial, allows you to borrow as much as \$50,000, depending on your ability to repay the loan amounts and terms subject to credit qualifications.

You may obtain information and an application by calling (701) 775-5577, (800) 532-NDAD (or -6323), or TTY (701) 795-6637. Or, visit <http://www.ndad.org/usrfiles/flpapplication2.pdf>

Eligible devices and services include modified vehicles, modifications on a home you own, hearing aids, mobility items, environmental control devices, augmentative communications devices, computers and adaptive hardware/software, and recreational/leisure adaptive equipment. Contact NDAD for a more complete list.

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mobile home and move into accessible housing.

In 2011, when his wheelchair became too ill-fitting and his vehicle ill-equipped to gain him more mobility, Knutson again contacted NDAD. The organization bought him a wheelchair lift, supplemented with a contribution from the East Grand Forks Eagles Club, where he has been a longtime member.

By the end of 2011, Knutson possessed both a new wheelchair and a vehicle lift – “absolutely” life-altering changes that “opened up the door,” he said, to a more independent, mobile lifestyle. He can buy groceries, run errands and even occasionally travel – activities that had become very difficult, sometimes impossible.

“I would say 90 percent of the time this allows me to go places I was never able to go,” he said.

For Knutson, there's extra satisfaction knowing the help he's received allows him to turn around and assist others – including giving his own mother rides to stores. And then there's that volunteer respite work.

“No matter what shape you're in, you can do some volunteering,” Knutson said. “It's always beneficial when you can help out, too. It's not just about you being helped.”

To donate to NDAD, go to our website at www.ndad.org and click on the “Donate Now” button.

Or please mail your donation to NDAD, 2660 S. Columbia Road, Grand Forks, ND 58201

'It's good to ask for help when you need it'

NDAD helps ensure Wahpeton mom's presence for son's out-of-town cranial surgery

Surgery is giving little LaShon Strickland a chance to overcome a disfiguring condition that threatened to dog him throughout his life. NDAD support helped ensure his mom's on-site support during the surgery and hospital stay.

The Wahpeton boy, who turned 1 on Aug. 17, was born with craniosynostosis, which circumvents soft areas of an infant's head that, with time, allow the skull to expand and grow. LaShon's skull plates were fused at birth, threatening to misshapen his head as his skull grew.

LaShon, at 5½ months old, underwent surgery on his cranial vault at a St. Paul, Minn., hospital. Pieces of his inflexible skull were removed and replaced with dissolvable plates that will disappear as his skull grows into a more typically rounded shape.

With a much-needed assist from gas cards provided by NDAD, LaShon's mother, Lashonda Nolen, traveled between Wahpeton, N.D., and St. Paul. NDAD also helped with her hotel stay during surgery. "I'm from Indiana originally, and we don't have programs like this," she said, adding that the work by client services representative Jeri Hietala left her "amazed."



Lashonda & LaShon Strickland

Lashonda hopes her son's story will inspire others to ask for the help they need. "There is help out there," she said. "It's good to ask for help when you need it."

Lake 'Escape' again a wet success

People with physical disabilities enjoy time on water

Nelson Lake Recreation Area near Center, N.D., again was ground zero in for this year's NDAD "Escape to the Lake," held in June. The one-day



event allows people of various ages with physical disabilities to share water skiing time with skiing professionals from Texas Adaptive Aquatics. Thirty individuals took advantage of the event's 18th year to

ski with the pros' guidance and support.

In addition to providing side skiers, Aberdeen Aqua Addicts performed a water-skiing show for the participants, numerous family members and event volunteers.

Nelson Lake, with its water heated by a nearby power plant, provides a more comfortable, safe water experience for many of the participants who have varying physical challenges.

The event is open to any North Dakota resident with a physical disability. It's not too early to plan for 2013's Escape, and there's room for more participants. Contact NDAD for more information.

Wheelin' & Dealin' advertisements, courtesy of NDAD, provide a forum for people to buy or sell new or used equipment.

Ads are listed online at www.ndad.org

To place a Wheelin' & Dealin' ad, please call 1 (800) 532-NDAD.

If your ad is running currently and you would like it removed, please call the number above.



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North Dakota Association for the Disabled, Inc.
2660 S. Columbia Road
Grand Forks, ND 58201

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We're Working For You

NDAD is a nonprofit, charitable organization founded by concerned citizens to assist mentally and physically disadvantaged people in North Dakota, many of whom are ineligible for some desperately needed services from other agencies.

Disabling conditions often are very costly. NDAD believes people with disabilities, when given the opportunity, can live more satisfying, productive lives – and NDAD has helped thousands do just that. This often requires the purchase of specialized equipment, medical treatment, or other services.

NDAD provides financial assistance through funds generated both by the organization and community projects. NDAD also provides information and referral services to help people receive assistance through other agencies, when possible. For more information about our services, please contact one of our offices nearest you:

2660 S. Columbia Road
Grand Forks, ND 58201
(701) 775-5577
1 (800) 532-NDAD

21 University Drive N.
Fargo, ND 58102
(701) 281-8215
1 (888) 363-NDAD

1808 20th Ave. S.E.
Minot, ND 58701
(701) 838-8414
1 (888) 999-NDAD

514 Reclamation Drive
Williston, ND 58801
(701) 774-0741
or 774-0444
1 (877) 777-NDAD

You'll also find NDAD's online sites informative, insightful and convenient.

WEBSITE: www.ndad.org



BLOG: <http://ndad.areavoices.com>

Our newsletters always are made available at www.ndad.org.
Contact one of our offices if you would like to be added or removed from our newsletter mailing list.
Watch for NDAD's online-only winter newsletter at www.ndad.org.