



NDAD

helping others to help themselves

Fall Edition 2016

Insider

NDAD'S MISSION:
Enhance the quality of lives
of individuals facing health challenges.



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Alicia Rombs

“I want to stand tall and live as independently as possible”

■ Living with quadriplegia following near-fatal experience, Bismarck woman sees ‘a better person’ emerging

From where she sits these days, Alicia Rombs has a better outlook on life – and on people less fortunate than herself.

Sometimes a chair can do that. Even for a woman living with quadriplegia.

“It’s made a night-and-day difference,” the 40-year-old Rombs, a Bismarck woman who has lived with extensive paralysis for about 2½ years. “It’s given me more self-confidence, especially at work. I’m able to look people in the eye and not just have them look down at you.”

Alicia’s chair is a newly equipped power wheelchair. NDAD helped Alicia with a substantial share of her power chair’s purchase cost this past summer, she said. The North Dakota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Medicare were the other major purchase partners.

The chair is particularly helpful, she says, when she’s working with customers at Bismarck’s Menards home improvement store. She works part-time designing countertops and cabinets, selling large and small appliances and handling department reports, particularly to track special orders and contact people when those orders arrive.

“I get to meet new people and talk,” she said. “It’s a form of interaction. And I enjoy people. . . . I love this role. I love helping people design their dreams and making them come true.”

Hers is no basic power chair. Alicia can raise it so she’s much closer to another’s eye level, lower it to work at a desk, extend her legs upwards or lie herself backwards.

Five-foot-5 when she was disabled, Alicia says she can elevate herself closer to 5-foot-8 or -9 with help from her power chair.

She can make transfers to and from the chair to more easily relieve or avoid pressure sores.

At home, she’s able to reach inside her apartment cupboards, refrigerator and other places once difficult or impossible to do alone.



Alicia Rombs

“NDAD is definitely a good place to check out. They’re very helpful, very easy to talk to. Great to work with. Everybody that I met through NDAD was wonderful, and I appreciate it very, very much.”

Alicia Rombs

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“I was always struggling to reach up and hoping I could find something” without being able to see it, she recalled. “Now I have no problem.”

Alicia also uses the chair, with its longer-lasting battery and more durable tires, to move about outdoors, including the three-quarter mile trip to and from work from her Bismarck apartment. She’s hoping the weather will permit her to commute that way during much of the winter, too.

Alicia insists her new chair is “a necessity -- everything I need to shift weight appropriately for more independence.”

Putting her power chair within reach

Not that long ago, Alicia recalls, she doubted ever obtaining much mobility and independence again.

She had lived in an apartment with limited accessibility and used a donated power chair that had limited power capabilities. She had to carry a charger with her wherever she went. “I could make it to work, and then I had to charge the battery, which meant sitting still for at least two hours,” she recalled. “It worked, but it didn’t work.”

With her new power chair, she said, “I can go to work, I can drive around the store as need be, and drive back home without the battery dying.”

Through consultations with Sanford Health Care Accessories it was determined what type of wheelchair would meet her needs best. Medicare would only pay a portion of the costs, though, and even with a valuable financial contribution from state Vocational Rehabilitation, Alicia still found herself short of funds.

Voc-Rehab counselor Angela Parr suggested that NDAD be contacted.

“Since then, I’ve heard a lot about NDAD through other people I’ve talked to – and I didn’t even realize it existed.”

NDAD’s application process was easy, Alicia said, and she felt similarly at ease talking to the North Dakota charity’s representatives. “It wasn’t like they were looking down at you and treating you like you were actually handicapped,” she explained. “They treated you like a human being and that you actually mattered, which was outstanding.”



Alicia working at Menards.

She already has recommended NDAD to others. “NDAD is definitely a good place to check out,” she said. “They’re very helpful, very easy to talk to. Great to work with. Everybody that I met through NDAD was wonderful, and I appreciate it very, very much.”

Someday, Alicia hopes to obtain a driver’s license and vehicle once again, but, for starters, she’ll need funds to pay for a driver’s evaluation first. “I’m going to be waiting for a while,” she said.

Still, she says, “I didn’t think I would get this far. I didn’t think I would be able to do as much on my own as I am. It makes a big difference.”

Learning a new life

She’s worked for Menards about 11 ½ years, starting off doing morning stock and deliveries in Aberdeen, S.D. She eventually was transferred to Bismarck to be a front-end manager and “was within one or two interviews of becoming a store manager,” she said.

Then Alicia almost died when struck by a gun discharge in her Bismarck home in early July 2014.

Following four days on life support, she came out of a medically induced coma. She gradually realized she could move only her eyes and mouth.

“I was just scared, and I had no idea what

was going to happen or how I was going to manage,” she recalled.

Alicia spent two weeks in an intensive care unit at Bismarck’s Sanford Health hospital before her transfer to Fargo’s Vibra Hospital for acute care for two more weeks and Fargo’s Sanford Rehabilitation for three months before returning closer to home at Dakota Alpha transitional rehabilitation in Mandan.

After three months at Dakota Alpha, Alicia returned home.

One year after her injuries occurred, Alicia was back at Menard’s. A few months later, she assumed her current work role.

Now, she can move her shoulders, close her right hand about three quarters and her open her left hand for short periods of time. “Right now I use a keyboard pretty efficiently, and I can use a mouse,” she said. Alicia, who was right handed, has learned how to write with her left hand.

“It doesn’t seem like I’m quite a quad because I’m further advanced than most quads,” Alicia said.

Her oldest son, Anthony, 19, lives with her, and two younger children, Nicholas, 12, and Jacob, 10, who live with her ex-husband in Aberdeen, worry less about her since she obtained the new power chair, she said.

Alicia also receives caregiver support for several hours when she starts and finishes her day. “Otherwise,” she said, “I’m on my own.”

“I don’t want people’s pity,” she said. “I don’t want to be looked at as a victim. I want to stand tall, and be independent as possible. . . . I don’t



Alicia focuses on her computer.

look at events as a reason to be depressed. I look at it as what happened, happened. It really knocked me down, but in the long run, it’s helped me out, because I’ve been able to learn a lot of things that I hadn’t learned.”

Her near-fatal 2014 injury “made me a better person,” she added.

“It’s just been an eye-opening experience. It’s helped me really open up to life.”



Giving Hearts

← FEB **Day** 9TH →

givingheartsday.org

SAVE THE DATE!

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2017

- 1) Go online to ImpactGiveback.org on that day only
- 2) Use the search engine to find NDAD
- 3) Please donate – It will warm your heart when you give!

Donate on Feb. 9 to multiply the impact of your giving!

Your donation of \$10 or more will be matched by generous donors. Every gift counts!

The Faul Family

“NDAD has been wonderful for helping us”

■ Little Kashton’s story:

Expectant parents anxiously await the joy of their new baby coming into the world. New parents have hopes and dreams of their son or daughter living a happy, healthy life. When their baby is born with health concerns, what then? How do you move forward? Where do you turn for help?

Last December, the Faul family was asking those very questions.

Kaylon and Joanna were filled with happiness and joy awaiting the birth of their son. He would join a family of loving parents and four active siblings in Max, N.D. When Kashton was born on Dec.

16, 2015, his parents were over the moon with excitement.

When the doctor informed them Kashton had health issues, their excitement became fear for their son’s well-being.

“We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It’s easy to say, ‘It’s not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.’ Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes.”

– Fred Rogers, TV’s “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood”



Kashton Faul

The doctors said Kashton’s brain was not remembering to tell his body to breathe on its own while he slept. Kashton had to be connected to a bi-pap breathing machine and required round-the-clock observation. Since there were unanswered questions regarding his health, doctors informed the family that more tests needed to be done.

The family enjoys living in the small, rural community of

Max, but with Kashton’s immediate medical needs, they needed to travel to hospitals in faraway cities in order for their son to receive the best medical treatment.

Kashton’s primary doctor in Bismarck referred him to Sanford Health in Fargo. When more complex tests were needed, Kashton

Please lend a needed hand – from your heart

NDAD has supported individuals with disabilities and health issues for more than 40 years. As we look forward to the next 40 years and beyond, we are reaching out to our fellow North Dakotans to help support NDAD.

What better way to help NDAD than through Giving Hearts Day!

The Giving Hearts Day fundraiser is held by Dakota Medical Foundation, Impact Foundation and Alex Stern Family Foundation, all based in Fargo. Giving Hearts Day began nine years ago raising \$325,000 for local charities. It’s since transformed into one of the largest fundraising events in the region, with more than 300 North Dakota and western Minnesota organizations raising millions of dollars to support their missions.

Giving Hearts Day 2016 raised \$8.3 million for 326 charities.

Feb. 9, 2017, will be NDAD’s first Giving Hearts Day.

Through the Giving Hearts experience, we look forward to meeting others who share and support our passion: Helping Others to Help Themselves.

Please give from your heart to support NDAD’s mission to enhance the quality of lives of individuals facing health challenges. It is the kindness of others that brings hope to those in need.

Your donation to NDAD – 100 percent – will provide needed help for children such as Kashton Faul and other North Dakotans of all ages.



Kashton connected to a bi-pap breathing machine.

was referred to Gillette Children's Hospital in St. Paul, Minn.

Kaylon and Joanna were prepared to travel back and forth from Max to Fargo and St. Paul if that's where the specialists were to help their son. What caught them unprepared:

the expense of medical travel. With Joanna becoming a stay-at-home mom to provide round-the-clock care for Kashton, finances were tight and they began looking for help.

The Fauls reached out to NDAD for assistance.

Through NDAD's direct financial assistance program, the Faul family began receiving support with out-of-town medical travel expenses when traveling to Fargo and St. Paul.

"NDAD has been wonderful for helping us with gas money for our trips to Fargo and Minneapolis to see doctors for Kashton," Kaylon Faul recently told us.

Our hope at NDAD is that we are able to relieve their financial burden so they can focus on Kashton's health.

"The doctors are telling us that only time will show if he improves or not," Kaylon said. "It has been a long and challenging road for sure."

HELP is just around the corner

Do you know that the Fargo-Moorhead community has a program that allows you to borrow durable medical equipment for 90 days -- at no charge?

Through NDAD's Healthcare Equipment Loan Program (HELP), people living in North Dakota and neighboring communities have access to this valuable resource.

NDAD's Fargo location has served the community for seven years on North University Drive. We have a large inventory of medical equipment for people recovering from surgery or injury, experiencing a short illness, or simply wanting to try equipment before buying it.

There is no application to fill out, nor is there a financial qualification. We just ask that you be able to pick up and return the borrowed equipment.

NDAD's inventory consists of motorized wheelchairs and scooters, knee walkers, crutches, manual wheelchairs, canes, walkers, shower benches, shower chairs, transfer benches, toilet seat risers, tub grab bars, sock aides, toilet safety frames, commodes, rollators and more.

Sometimes health insurance companies or assistance programs deny people medical equipment because the need is temporary. It is good to know that NDAD is the place to go for HELP!

A Fargo resident recently borrowed a cane, walker, shower chair and toilet riser in preparation for knee surgery. Her health insurance would not pay for any medical equipment during her short recovery. When she left the Fargo office with her equipment, she said, "Thank goodness you are here!"

When you need temporary medical equipment, please call or visit us at one of our four North Dakota locations. Offices are open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. A NDAD client services representative will be happy to assist you.



NDAD's Healthcare Equipment Loan Program (HELP) is available at our offices in Grand Forks, Minot, Williston and Fargo.

Trevor Vannett

Bismarck man appreciates daily lift he gets from NDAD



Trevor Vannett

Trevor Vannett lives in a downtown Bismarck apartment that suits his needs reasonably well, given the 24-year-old has cerebral palsy and his limbs have limited functional movement resulting in the use of an electric wheelchair.

He also has 24/7 caregiver assistance. His building has an elevator and he owns his own van with a ramp, which a caregiver drives when needed.

When that's not available, he has access to Bismarck's transit service, though it requires him to provide at least 24-hour notice to use it.

"I can go out and do things," he said. "I can do almost whatever I please."

He's active. Several years ago, while still living with his parents in Mandan, Vannett ran but fell short of winning a seat on that community's City Commission. He also is a volunteer and Lions Club member.

A mobile and independent life begins at home. With help from a caregiver, Trevor uses a patient lift, which raises and transfers him from his bed or power chair with minimum physical effort and threat of orthopedic injury.

Then one day in 2016, "it stopped working," he recalled.

Trevor turned to NDAD for help, and the organization responded quickly, he recalled. He applied for assistance and qualified quickly with help from NDAD's client services office in Minot.

"I thought it would take much longer. I am very happy with the experience," Trevor said. The new lift "is working wonderfully."

NDAD was "very courteous and helpful," and treated him "with dignity and respect," he said.

Trevor appreciates that type of service and knows others living with disabling circumstances do, too.

Trevor also sits on two statewide councils with goals to improve the lives of an estimated 13,000 North Dakotans with developmental and intellectual disabilities and their families.

For several years, he's been one of several consumer representatives on the governor-appointed, 20-member state Council on Developmental Disabilities. Trevor also is one of 16 North Dakotans with disabilities who sits on the state Independent Living Council.

Trevor, who appreciates opportunities to be "vocal and visible," likes the council roles and the challenges that come with them.

"I enjoy them," he said. "I get to help others advocate for systems changes."

When people with disabilities can't find help for their particular circumstances, Trevor says he doesn't hesitate to mention NDAD as a source for possible assistance. It's based on his personal experience with the charity.

For that, he says thank you.



NDAD

helping others to help themselves

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NDAD is a nonprofit, charitable organization founded by concerned citizens to assist mentally and physically disadvantaged people in North Dakota, many of whom are not eligible for services from other agencies.

Disabling conditions often are very costly. NDAD was founded on the belief that people with disabilities, when given the opportunity, can live more satisfying, productive lives — and NDAD has helped thousands do just that since its creation in 1975. This often requires the purchase of specialized equipment, medical treatment, or other services.

NDAD provides financial assistance through funds generated by both the organization and community projects. NDAD also provides information and referral services to help people receive assistance through other agencies, when possible.

*It's **AMAZING** what people can do when there's help.*