NDAD aids Max, N.D., woman with nearly 500 miles of weekly trips for dialysis:

‘A wonderful, wonderful thing’

After more than three years, the weekly routine is quite familiar to Eunice and Richard Hausauer. Life-sustaining, too.

Each Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, the pair makes road trips from Max, N.D., to Bismarck and back. About 165 miles total each trip, almost all of the miles spent on U.S. Highway 83.

Their car had 23,000 miles on it in August, and 31,000 by early November.

Eunice learned three years ago this past August that she has end-stage renal disease. Her kidneys don’t work.

She’s 79. He’s 82. Each day feels more precious.

They’d hate to think how much more difficult the trips might be without NDAD’s help.

The charitable nonprofit organization assists the Hausauers with medical travel assistance to help them get to Eunice’s life-sustaining three-times-a-week dialysis appointments.

“Ohhh, that is a great help,” Eunice said of NDAD’s gas assistance. “You don’t know how much we appreciate the help that we’re getting. It’s well needed.”

Eunice’s primary doctor sent her to a kidney specialist in Bismarck about 3 1/2 years ago.

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Chair lift elevates man’s independence, spirits

John Patterson gets around much better these days, and the Mandan, N.D., resident says that’s helped improve his overall outlook on life.

John, 54, who has cervical myelopathy resulting from a 1994 motor vehicle accident, gets around in his van much better, and gets out much more, since he was able to add a lift for his powered wheelchair with help from NDAD.

With an assist from his daughter, CoryAnn Patterson, who’s also his primary caregiver, John successfully applied for general assistance from NDAD earlier this year. His lift was installed several months ago.

“It’s unbelievable. It’s just so much easier,” John said. He added a chuckle. “It’s like having my legs, pretty much.”

The lift is a vast improvement on the portable ramp CoryAnn had to set up each time John used the van. She sometimes pinched her fingers doing so, and the ramp at times wouldn’t stay assembled, they said. With winter snow, John sometimes struggled getting his power chair up the ramp. Sometimes, they needed help.

“It’s amazing,” CoryAnn said, laughing. “It’s so much easier to be able to get him to go out and do stuff” now. The new lift has “made a tremendous difference,” John added.

When they do use the van, CoryAnn often drives. John does “once in a while so I don’t forget how to do it.”

He hasn’t forgotten how his disabling predicament began one winter day 21 years ago.

A former moving van operator and concrete worker, John Patterson was driving young CoryAnn and her older brother, Joshua, to a Bismarck school. While waiting at a stop light in heavy traffic, their vehicle was rear-ended by another traveling at high speed. The children’s injuries were minimal. “I was thankful they were strapped down good,” he recalled. Though John was wearing a seat belt, too, “I took the brunt of it. I could feel the pain right away, but I didn’t realize everything was going to go like it has over the years.”

Medical scans eventually showed a spinal injury, and surgeries included putting cadaver vertebrae in his neck, he said.

The consequences of his injuries weren’t immediately evident. Over several years, John regressed from using a cane to a walker and then a wheelchair. His balance worsened. He lost strength. Bladder issues led to the need of a catheter. Yet, the worst day, John recalled, was when a social worker told him he’d never be able to work again. “You’ve got to be kidding me.” John replied, incredulously. He says that news nearly killed him.

These days, John is able to move only a few feet using his walker, and often he still needs a hand. He has survived years of joblessness, a divorce and multiple bouts with depression.

But John’s outlook improved a year ago, he said, when he sold his mobile home, moved into a single-level, accessible apartment in Mandan and obtained a van that could carry his power chair.

John says he draws what inner strength and resolve he has from “the love of my children” – CoryAnn and Joshua, and Joshua’s three young children, Tucker, Brodie and Macie. “They’ve always been there for me,” he said. “They’ve always encouraged me, and they do everything they can for me.”

And NDAD, he adds, “is a godsend.”
‘I’ve made tremendous progress’

NDAD helps determined Fargo woman stand tall on own

Just a few weeks before Christmas 2014, Deanna Bakken had something she really wanted her mom and dad to see.

So, Kay and Garry Bakken obliged her and went to see Deanna, who has cerebral palsy, work with her new Fargo physical therapist, Kari Torgerson. They saw far more than they had expected: Deanna stood and took a few steps—with the aid of a special, heavy-duty walker.

Deanna, now 49, hadn’t successfully used any walker in about a quarter century. Given her cerebral atrophy, no change was expected.

“It was a complete shock,” Kay Bakken recalled, “because I never thought I would see my daughter walk like that again.” Deanna recalls, “My mom had tears in her eyes and told my therapist, ‘This is the best Christmas gift ever.’”

Deanna began losing her coordination and falling more frequently while she was earning her bachelor’s degree in accounting at Minot State in the late 1980s. “I never got hurt,” she recalls, “but I knew it wasn’t going to work any more.”

Fast forward to late 2014. Deanna, who quips that walkers were dangerous weapons in her hands, seized Torgerson’s offer to try a U-Step Walking Stabilizer in therapy. The device has a u-shaped base that adds walking stability for patients with neurological problems, such as Parkinson’s disease. It also has a tension adjustment for controlling the rolling speed.

With therapy, Deanna showed so much progress that she contacted NDAD to see whether she could get help obtaining the costly walking device. NDAD approved her application. “NDAD has been a lifesaver for me,” she said.

Twice-weekly therapy since has given Deanna new muscle strength and stability. She may never walk on her own again, but where she once could stand alone for only seconds, Deanna now can remain upright on her own for three or four minutes. “I’ve made tremendous progress,” Deanna said. Enough progress, certainly, to make a grateful mom cry.

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“I really had built up some fluid in my body,” Eunice recalled. “They knew something was wrong. When they checked, they found out I had no more kidneys working at all... I thought it was the end of the world. ... I was so shocked. When they calmed me down, they already had everything set up at the hospital to get me dialysis as soon as I could. I had just given up.”

A sleepless, middle-of-the-night conversation with a Sanford Health nurse provided a turning point, though. “I had some little angel who worked it out with me, I guess,” Eunice recalled. “She talked me through this and told me there were worse things that could happen—and that got me through it.” A week in the hospital, with daily dialysis, also helped her physical outlook.

A younger sister who lives in Bismarck comes and visits Eunice during each dialysis, and they frequently go for lunch afterward, and “then by the time I get home, I’m ready for a little nap.”

Eunice, a native of Mercer, N.D., was a school teacher for 38 years, starting with four years of country school south of Mercer. She had worked 34 years as an elementary school teacher when she retired in May 1993, but she continued to substitute teach until her need for dialysis began.

She had a triple bypass, with a pacemaker added, in 1996. She has diabetes and, more recently, surgeries for skin cancer. Macular degeneration, diagnosed more than two years ago, is claiming her eyesight.

Richard Hausauer does the driving, and lots of other chores, for the couple. Cleaning. Cooking. Even canning cucumbers. “He claims he’s just always played out,” Eunice said of Richard, a retired road construction worker. “My gosh, I said, let me get some of that energy!” She adds about her husband of 54 years: “He’s wonderful. I don’t know what I’d do without him.”

And NDAD’s help? “Ohh, that money that they’ve given us for gas is really something. ... A wonderful, wonderful thing.”
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.

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