Happy for the HELP

Scott Kolling discovers NDAD program opens doors in MS challenge

Thanks from the heart

Generous donors help NDAD surpass goal in Giving Hearts debut

Eager for next Escape

Western N.D. couple big on volunteering for NDAD lake event

Scooter lift fills her need

NDAD’s assistance aids stroke victim’s quest to remain mobile
Scott Kolling had never heard of NDAD until recently. Now, that knowledge has given the East Grand Forks, Minn., man a better outlook on living with multiple sclerosis.

“It’s amazing that we hadn’t been told about NDAD before,” said Scott, who turns 51 in late March. “It has opened up quite a few different doors for me. I’m sure there’s quite a few still we haven’t even explored.”

Scott, diagnosed more than 10 years ago with MS when his right leg and arm “weren’t working correctly,” he recalled, uses a power wheelchair and has limited use of his right hand. He wasn’t surprised. Optic neuritis, sometimes a precursor to MS in adults, claimed the vision in his right eye about 10 years before that.

“I went to the doctor. He asked what I thought was wrong,” Scott recalled. “I said, ‘I think I’ve got MS.’ And he looked at me like, ‘what an odd thing to diagnose yourself with.’ . . .

“Turned out I was right.”

So as his body’s abilities have declined, Scott said, NDAD’s Healthcare Equipment Loan Program (HELP) has been a happy discovery.

Through HELP, he and his wife, Kari, have borrowed a shower bench that’s dramatically increased his ability to transfer himself when his wife isn’t home.

He’s borrowed a bed rail and gait belt, too. Scott also is using an electric kneel-to-stand lift that’s on loan from NDAD that, he says, has been a “big time” aid.

“You could not believe how that’s helped out,” he said. “It’s helped my wife with her back and me with the quickness and ease of it all. It’s a life saver.”

Through NDAD’s HELP program, people in North Dakota or neighboring communities may have access to durable medical equipment for up to 90 days at no charge.

HELP often is used by people recovering from an injury or surgery, or dealing with a short illness.
Some people borrow the equipment to try before buying it from other sources, perhaps while waiting on insurance coverage or other financial program assistance.

The Kollings first learned about NDAD from an Altru Health System occupational therapist, who told them about a different service provided by NDAD: accessible vans, available for up to two days per month.

The Kollings have borrowed one of two Grand Forks vans several times since late 2016. During one use, the couple stopped at NDAD to obtain a shower bench. Scott expected to wait for Kari in the loaned van “until I realized, ‘Hey, I can go out!’ – and joined his wife inside the office.

More recently, Kari borrowed a NDAD van to bring Scott home after a month away in Altru Hospital and transitional care. They made one extra stop en route home: the East Grand Forks movie theater complex.

“The last time I went to a movie was a couple of years ago at least,” Scott said. “Ohh, it was huge. You would not believe how good it felt that I could go in.”

Kari thought the free NDAD loans were “just wonderful,” too, Scott said. “I didn't think we'd be eligible. I never even heard about it.”

The Kollings have lived in East Grand Forks for about 10 years. Kari, a Hatton, N.D., native, works for Hugo’s Marketplace stores as a semitruck receiver. Scott’s MS diagnosis before their engagement forced him to leave his job as director of maintenance at the hospital and nursing home in Fosston, Minn., where he attended high school.

The Gully, Minn., native's days raising beef cattle and working at a gas station are long behind him. MS also has limited his ability to pursue two of his passions: hunting and ice fishing.

He learned to shoot left-handed after losing the sight in his right eye, but his disease in recent years has discouraged his efforts to hunt.

As for winter fishing, “Power chairs don't do well on ice,” he explained.

Amid MS-created obstacles, Scott’s newfound access to NDAD’s HELP program provides him with some mobility victories. He admits to a hint of reluctance about making his discovery “more widespread and known.”

“I initially felt a bit greedy,” he said, only partially joking when he said other users “might gobble up” his own access to the NDAD equipment for loan.

“But we like it so well,” he added. “People should get equal benefits from it.”

NDAD’s Healthcare Equipment Loan Program (HELP) is provided at its offices in Fargo, Grand Forks, Minot and Williston. More information is available at NDAD.org or at (800) 532-NDAD.
NDAD appreciates your Giving Heart-felt gifts

NDAD reached 152 percent of its fundraising goal during its first participation in Giving Hearts Day 2017, thanks to the generosity of 77 supporters and five businesses and organizations who stepped up to provide matching funds. Included in gifts to NDAD was $2,500 from a Gate City Bank drawing.

NDAD was among 360 nonprofits in North Dakota and western Minnesota to participate in the 24-hour give-a-thon Feb. 9. A total of $10,614,115 was raised – about $2.3 million more than in 2016. The Giving Hearts Day fundraiser was hosted by Dakota Medical Foundation, Impact Foundation and the Alex Stern Family

NDAD awarded $2,100 grant from NDCF for equipment

The North Dakota Community Foundation made a $2,100 grant award to NDAD last fall for purchases of additional durable medical equipment for NDAD’s short-term Healthcare Equipment Loan Program (HELP), which is available at all four of NDAD’s offices. In 2015, NDAD loaned 2,125 pieces of HELP equipment without charge, saving borrowers about $453,000 versus having to purchase the equipment. For more information, visit NDAD.org.
On Feb. 9, Josette and Rob Severson of rural Mandan, N.D., went online to the website for the regional online give-a-thon Giving Hearts Day, used that site’s search engine to find charitable nonprofit NDAD – and gave with all of their hearts.

They were among 77 individual, family and business donors to NDAD who did the same that day.

Josette and Rob even welcomed the opportunity to be part of NDAD’s social media promotion for Giving Hearts Day.

Supporters of several charitable causes, the Seversons have made ample room in their hearts for NDAD since first learning several years ago about the charitable nonprofit.

The Seversons have not limited their NDAD participation to financial gifts.

For several years, the couple -- high school sweethearts who will celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary in late June -- have been volunteers at Escape to the Lake. North Dakota’s annual adaptive water recreation event was founded in the early 1990s by NDAD and held annually since.

For most years, Escape has taken place at Nelson Lake near Center, N.D., with on-site assistance from Sporting Chance North Dakota, the Aberdeen (S.D.) Aqua Addicts performance ski team and Texas Adaptive Aquatics, the latter which has participated with NDAD from the start.

The event also has included volunteers such as the Seversons, who have every intention of continuing.

“Absolutely,” Josette said. “We’ve blocked out that weekend going forward.”

Escape gives children and adults with physical disabilities a chance to water ski safely and enjoyably, thanks to adaptive ski equipment, professional oversight and, on average,

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Josette Severson
12 volunteers to assist each individual trip around the lake.

“Most people would say ‘it can't be done,’” said Rob, an engineer who owns embedded design company USBmicro and also CircuitGizmos, an online electronics business aimed at other engineers and hobbyists. “It can be done, and it looks easy and there's a lot of difficulty behind it.

“It's a can-do kind of thing, and it works.”

Escape also offers participants pontoon rides, a performance ski show and lunch.

The event is at Nelson Lake Recreation Area in Oliver County. The lake is not that far a drive from the Severson home.

“We had seen signage (for the event),” said Josette, who teaches firearms safety and other classes as owner of Prairie Patriot Firearms Training (Rob also assists her.) “But we never really put two and two together.

That changed after they met and became friends with Don Santer, NDAD's chief executive officer, at a firearms event.

Don told the Seversons about NDAD’s involvement with Escape, and the couple attended the next scheduled event to see for themselves.

They were hooked.

“It was really heartwarming for me to see everybody coming together and helping folks who have disabilities who would never have had that chance to do something that we take for granted,” Josette said. “It was really cool.”

Volunteering at Escape makes for a long, but “very rewarding” day, Josette said.

“Hard work, but it feels great.”

Escape helps the Seversons put their own experience with their now-adult son in perspective.

He had health issues, mostly during his childhood, including asthma and some skin concerns.

“Every year when we participate in Escape to the Lake, I do say a few prayers,” Josette said. “I'm thankful my child is healthy.”

The Seversons give thanks for NDAD, too.

A scene from 2016's Escape to the Lake. The 2017 Escape is Saturday, June 17, at Nelson Lake Recreation Area near Center, N.D. Participation is open to people with physical disabilities. Call NDAD at (800) 532-NDAD for more information, or visit NDAD.org.
NDAD helps Bismarck woman’s mobility quest following stroke

The first time Gail Erickson learned about the North Dakota Association for the Disabled was close to 20 years ago. “Myles, my husband, had spina bifida, so I had heard about NDAD,” wrote Gail, 68, in a recent interview. At the time, Myles Erickson was assistant director of Bismarck-based Dakota Center for Independent Living. “Myles used to refer people” to NDAD, she recalled. “I didn’t know that much about NDAD. I was surprised to hear all you did.”

A career social worker and nonprofit services administrator, Gail never expected to someday seek NDAD’s aid for herself -- a lift to transport a scooter. Her scooter. Myles died of a heart attack Jan. 28, 1997, leaving his wife of 24 years living alone on 2½ acres in rural Bismarck.

Fourteen years to the day of her husband’s death, Gail’s life took another dramatic, unexpected turn. “I was sleeping,” she recalled. “I got out of bed and collapsed on the floor beside my bed. I don’t remember that. That’s where they -- my director and colleague -- found me. I don’t remember that, either. They found me at 11 a.m. the next day.”

By that time, it had been at least five hours since Gail had collapsed – a serious gap in time between having a stroke and receiving treatment that might help minimize the damage.

“I was physically impacted on my right side -- paralyzed and couldn’t talk,” she recalled.

Following a month-long hospital stay, Gail was transferred to Mandan’s Dakota Alpha. It’s a residential and skilled nursing facility providing rehabilitation services for people with a brain injury or physical disability. She spent six months there.

With daily visits from physical, occupational and speech therapists, Gail progressed from using a wheelchair to a one-handed hemi walker.

At five months, she received behind-the-wheel driver rehabilitation from Bismarck’s MedCenter One (now Sanford Health), and she was able to drive again after a vehicle fitting.

“For me, mobility and independence mean everything!” wrote Gail, who now drives almost daily. “I could go places that I couldn’t go before. That is independence.”

After her stroke, Gail was forced to sell her rural Bismarck home. Her job as director of suicide prevention at North Dakota Health Services ended.

After her discharge from Dakota Alpha, she
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.