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

Ron Gibbens
NDAD’s co-founder and president rides into retirement with positive outlook

Escape to the Lake
North Dakota’s adaptive water recreation event returns for 24th season

Jirys out and about
Langdon area girl’s continuous healthcare needs get NDAD assist

PLUS: Tax deductions; Faye Gibbens Memorial Grant recipient; HELP gets Fargo shed
quarter-century ago, Ron Gibbens was asked during a newspaper interview what career he might choose if he wasn’t president and CEO of the charity he co-founded. His reply: “Motorcycle racer or sky diver.”

Ron laughed recently when reminded of his answer. “Well, I was much younger when I said that,” he said, still chuckling. “I couldn’t consider doing that today. I was kind of a risk taker.”

Ron need not choose new career pursuits now, risky or otherwise. The 77-year-old rural Cando native retired from NDAD earlier this year, though he continues as its president in a volunteer role.

Turns out a sky-diving career never had a chance. Ron “credits” his late first wife, Faye, who helped found NDAD with her husband and for decades served as its program services leader. “I never jumped out of an airplane, but I wanted to,” Ron recalled. “Actually, one of the first arguments Faye and I had, I was going to college in Mayville, finishing up my credentials so I could teach, and there was a sign on the bulletin board (that) the Parachute Club was forming. So, I went home and told Faye I was going to do that.” He chuckling. “I won’t go into the details why I ended up not joining.”

Fortunately for Ron, Faye enjoyed riding with him on his various motorcycles over the years, including on both day trips and long-distance vacations. Ron estimates he’s owned at least 15 different motorcycles since obtaining a trail bike from Faye’s father years ago. “Each of the last three, I’ve said, ‘This is probably going to be my last motorcycle,’” he said, chuckling.

Motorcycle racing and sky diving are activities that quickly conjure potential negative consequences in many minds. Not for Ron, a man routinely intrigued by positive possibilities before reviewing any negatives.

Besides, Ron insists, some of the most positive influences on his life came out of negative experiences. “I think it’s the fact that they were learning experiences for me, that I was able to look back and see what caused the difficulty or struggle and think about ways to prevent repeating it.”

Gibbens officially entered retirement on March 1 with a resume of health challenges not unlike some past and present NDAD clients. Ron was diagnosed with COPD about 2 ½ years ago and now uses portable oxygen. A decade ago, he learned he had atrial fibrillation (AFib), a heart arrhythmia he strives to control with help from medication.

Ron was diagnosed with prostate cancer in the early 2000s. It was discovered while he was
being tested as a possible kidney match for his then-ailing wife. Ron said his early diagnosis helped him treat it more effectively. Better still, he said, a better kidney match was found for Faye; that transplanted kidney gave her another 10 mostly active years. She died in 2014.

Faye's health issues helped further deepen the couple's relationship and "just made a more understanding person of me," he said. Plus, Ron felt it enhanced his already gentle-natured self. "I think I've become more of an optimist – looking at the positive side of any experience I go through."

He says the best example may center around their only child, Mike, born in July 1967.

Then Maddock residents, Faye and Ron Gibbens happily enjoying their baby's first year of life when they began noticing Mike's physical development at times didn't match their expectations. While his intellectual development seemed normal, Ron recalled, Mike "wasn't able to sit up. Sit him on the floor? He would tip. Instead of crawling, he'd pull himself with his arms and didn't make use of his legs. We noticed his feet were stiff."

Ron and Faye made an appointment for Mike with a Bismarck pediatrician. There, Ron and Faye were told Mike had cerebral palsy and directed them to see a specialist in Fargo.

"We were devastated," Ron said.

When they couldn't get an appointment immediately in Fargo, "we went home and agonized and started reading Encyclopedia Britannica about cerebral palsy – remember, this was years before the internet existed – and of course it gives examples of the worst-case conditions that you could possibly imagine." Neither of them had known parents of children with cerebral palsy, "and you know in those days kids who were disabled weren't taken out much," Ron said. "And you didn't see them out in public."

The parents struggled mightily with Mike's diagnosis for days that turned into weeks. Finally, "we just sat down and talked and said, 'Mike is the same baby he was before we knew about this. Let's forget about this and treat him like he's just our baby'” and deal with what comes as it comes. "We had a lot of 'what will be?' and 'what will the future hold?' But we soon realized that there's no way of knowing, so it's not going to be helpful to concentrate on it. 'We'll deal with today – and today's OK.'”

For Ron and Faye, that adjustment helped launch a lifelong evolution of changes in attitude that deepened and enriched both their parenting and love for Mike. It also helped increase their awareness of the varied and substantial challenges faced by children and adults with disabilities – disparities in all aspects of society, including education, health care and recreation. They recognized the possibilities for people with disabilities, not merely what others could do for them but what they could do for themselves if only given opportunities to be more mobile and independent.

They formed a support group for people with disabilities and their parents, which formally organized later as the charitable nonprofit North Dakota Association for the Disabled in 1975.

“It ends up being the most positive thing that ever happened," Ron said.

Mike, who turns 51 in July, remains NDAD's ambassador. He lives, with caregiver support, at the Grand Forks home of Ron and his second wife, Pam. Mike travels regularly around the region in his own accessible vehicle, actively supporting softball teams and University of North Dakota athletics, especially hockey.

Don't be surprised to see Mike enjoying one of his lifelong summer passions: motorcycles. He'll be the one in a power wheelchair-accessible sidecar, attached to a Harley-Davidson driven by a newly retired dad.
This is how NDAD Escapes!

NDAD understands the importance of physical activity for people with disabilities, which is why it has sponsored adaptive recreational activities for most of its 40-plus year existence.

NDAD’s annual Escape to the Lake is nothing short of notable, an occasion that few who witness will ever forget.

An event NDAD founded in the 1990s with help from Texas Adaptive Aquatics, Escape to the Lake gives adults and children with a wide variety of physical disabilities an opportunity to water-ski on a North Dakota lake.

Part of the event — this year held on June 16 — typically includes opportunities to take pontoon rides, watch a performance water-ski team show and enjoy lunch with family members, caregivers and friends old and new. It’s free for these participants.

Intermittent showers and cooler weather failed to dampen the fun at this year’s event, which saw 21 people with disabilities ski around Nelson Lake, near Center, N.D. See photos from the 2018 Escape HERE.

The 25th annual Escape to the Lake will be held at Nelson Lake Recreation Area, northwest of Bismarck and Mandan. The event is set for June 15, 2019.

Contact NDAD at (800) 532-NDAD, or visit NDAD.org or one of our four offices for more information.

Escape to the Lake 2018 sponsors

NDAD

Sporting Chance
Bismarck

Texas Adaptive Aquatics
Houston, Texas

Aberdeen (S.D.)
Aqua Addicts

Revolutions Power Sports & Marine
Grand Forks

McLean Electric Cooperative
Garrison

Midco Foundation
Sioux Falls, S.D.

Cass County Electric Cooperative Foundation
Operation Round Up
Fargo

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative
Operation Round Up
Carrington

CircuitGizmos
Mandan

Prairie Patriot
Mandan

Pub 21
Bismarck

Southgate Casino, Bar & Grill
Grand Forks

Coca-Cola Bottling Co.
High Country
Bismarck

Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co.
Mandan

Separate Escape to the Lake adaptive skiers, each with support from two Aberdeen (S.D.) Aqua Addicts team members, pass while going opposite directions during the 2018 event at Nelson Lake near Center, N.D.
NDAD NEWS IN BRIEF

Wings for All, an airport environment event by The Arc, Upper Valley, has been named the 2018 recipient of NDAD’s $5,000 Faye Gibbens Memorial Grant.

The Arc, based in Grand Forks, will conduct an airport “rehearsal” specially designed for individuals with autism or other intellectual and physical disabilities, plus their families and aviation professionals on Sat., Sept. 15, at Grand Forks International Airport. It’s a chance for families to be introduced to and practice airport entrances, obtaining border passes, going through security and even boarding a plane.

A review of safety protocols and a chance to explore the aircraft will be followed by a reception in the airport lobby. Training sessions for volunteers, plus TSA and airport personnel, are planned prior to the event to demonstrate best-practices interactions with individuals who have sensory issues, physical limitations and other distinct needs.

Allegiant Airlines and Grand Forks Regional Airport Authority are The Arc’s partners in North Dakota’s first-ever Wings for All event.

The grant is named for NDAD’s late co-founder and longtime program services leader, who died in 2014. NDAD awards the grant to a nonprofit organization or agency for a health, welfare, social service or educational purpose to help at-risk populations. NDAD’s next call for grant applications is set for spring of 2019.

NDAD added a 12-by-16-foot storage shed May 21 at its 21 N. University Dr. location in Fargo, which is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. HELP provides wheelchairs, scooters, crutches, shower benches, toilet risers, canes and other free durable medical equipment loans of up to 90 days.

HELP also is available through NDAD’s Grand Forks, Minot and Williston offices.

Learn more from the Fargo office by calling (701) 281-8215 or (888) 363-NDAD.

NDAD was one of the sponsors of a March Mobility Madness wheelchair basketball tournament at the Mandan Middle School on March 18, organized by Dreams In Motion. Proceeds will help Dreams in Motion provide adaptive sports programs in the Bismarck-Mandan area and elsewhere.

NDAD also was a sponsor of Altru’s 9th Annual Spin for Kids Grand Forks, held April 14 at Red River High School. The mission of Spin for Kids, organized by Altru Health Foundation and its Outpatient Pediatric Therapy Services, is to provide supportive programs, services and equipment to children with disabilities within the Altru community and service region. More photos and videos from Spin for Kids HERE.

Upcoming NDAD-sponsored community fundraisers include:

- Thurs., June 28, 5 to 8 p.m., East Grand Forks (Minn.) Eagles Club, for Kristie Olson, who had a double mastectomy after she was diagnosed with breast cancer.
- Thurs., July 26, 5 to 9 p.m., East Grand Forks Eagles Club, for Russ Rarick, East Grand Forks, who has advanced tonsil cancer.

Follow NDAD.org and NDAD’s Facebook and Twitter pages for updates.

NDAD’s Fargo office recently gained more storage space to accommodate the organization’s increasingly popular free Healthcare Equipment Loan Program (HELP).
Jiry Rosecrans, of rural Edmore, needs to receive infusions in Fargo every two weeks to treat a rare brain tumor that was diagnosed several years ago. That translates into more than five hours of road trip every two weeks for Jiry, who turns 13 on July 3, with mom Bridget driving and usually her two younger siblings, Jace, 3, and Janee, 1, along, too.

Since August 2017, NDAD has helped lessen the Rosecrans’ burden by providing medical travel assistance to reduce the family’s transportation costs. (Rosecrans also received medical travel assistance once involving an appointment for Jace, who is autistic.) That’s a huge help for Bridget, herself on disability for a traumatic brain injury and living on a fixed income. She was surprised to learn such help was available. Bridget says she’s shared that knowledge “with quite a few people,” and also information about NDAD’s free short-term durable medical equipment loan program, which Jiry has used.

Jiry, a Bottineau native, has faced multiple health and development challenges, including frequent head- and stomach aches, sporadic vision loss and stunted growth, during her young life, which began as the surviving twin in a two-month premature birth.

“At 9 years old, she still was wearing her 3-year-old clothes,” Bridget said.

Following multiple inconclusive diagnoses, Jiry was found several years ago to have craniopharyngioma, a tumor resulting from aberrant growth of a part of the brain near the pituitary gland. Then, earlier this year, Jiry was diagnosed with chronic recurrent multifocal osteomyelitis (CRMO), a rare autoinflammatory disease marked by inflammation, lesions and pain in the bones. Jiry is dealing with varying ailments “all the time” and has needed to be rushed to area hospitals, says her mom. Still, the young girl takes much of her health troubles in stride and seemingly never for granted, attending Langdon Public Schools whenever she’s able. “It is amazing, her spirit,” Bridget said. “She’s got an old soul. When you talk with her, you feel like, ‘Man, and you’re only 12?’”

Now nearly 13, Jiry said with a big, convincing smile, “I’m feeling better.”
Get tax deductions for certain accessible expenses

Thinking of purchasing a wheelchair-accessible van, or making your home more accessible?
Publication 502 of the Internal Revenue Service, “Medical and Dental Expenses,” states that both actions have provisions for inclusion as medical and dental expenses.

For 2018, you can deduct only the part of your medical and dental expenses that exceed 7.5 percent of your adjusted gross income.

Here are just a few things you can include in medical expenses for cars and homes:

- The cost of special hand controls and other special equipment installed in a vehicle for the use of a person with a disability.
- The difference between the cost of a regular vehicle and a vehicle specially designed to hold a wheelchair.
- Special equipment installed in a home, or for improvements, if their main purpose is medical care for you, your spouse, or your dependent.

The cost of permanent improvements that increase the value of your property may be partly included as a medical expense. The cost of the improvement is reduced by the increase in the value of your property. The difference is a medical expense. If the value of your property isn’t increased by the improvement, the entire cost is included as a medical expense.

Certain improvements made to accommodate a home to your disabled condition, or that don’t usually increase the value of the home, and the cost can be included in full as medical expenses. These improvements include, but aren’t limited to, the following items:
- Constructing entrance or exit ramps for your home.
- Widening doorways at entrances or exits to your home.
- Widening or otherwise modifying hallways and interior doorways.
- Installing railings, support bars, or other modifications to bathrooms.
- Lowering or modifying kitchen cabinets and equipment.
- Moving or modifying electrical outlets and fixtures.
- Installing porch lifts and other forms of lifts (but elevators generally add value to the house).
- Modifying fire alarms, smoke detectors,
and other warning systems.

- Modifying stairways.
- Adding handrails or grab bars anywhere (whether or not in bathrooms).
- Modifying hardware on doors.
- Modifying areas in front of entrance and exit doorways.
- Grading the ground to provide access to the residence.

Only reasonable costs to accommodate a home to a disabled condition are considered medical care. Additional costs for personal motives, such as for architectural or aesthetic reasons, aren’t medical expenses.

IRS Publication 502 explains the itemized deduction for medical and dental expenses that you claim on Schedule A (Form 1040). It discusses what expenses, and whose expenses, you can and cannot include in figuring the deduction. It explains how to treat reimbursements and how to figure the deduction. It also tells you how to report the deduction on your tax return and what to do if you sell medical property or receive damages for a personal injury.

Find out more online [HERE](#).